DRUID MAGAZINE

On Being an American Druid

FALL 2015

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DRUID MAGAZINE

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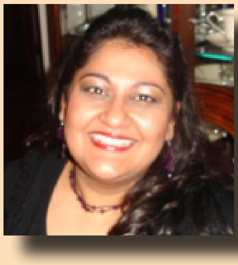

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK...

RENU K. ALDRICH

WELCOME TO DRUID MAGAZINE!

Dear readers,

On behalf of the entire editorial team, thank you for making our inaugural issue a huge success! We are thrilled with your response and hope that this second edition not only informs, but also delights and inspires you. We are proud to bring you a tremendous amount of content from authors and artists across the world.

To celebrate the dark time of the year, we present Wanda C.'s news feature on the connections between Samhuinn and Halloween and a special photo that just may illustrate how thin the veil between the worlds can become. Our thanks to past ADF Archdruid Ian Corrigan for helping us honor Isaac Bonewits five years after his passing. Isaac's legacy lives on as an ancestor of American Druidry, and his spirit remains in the hearts of so many. His widow, Phaedra, provided wonderful photos to illustrate the tribute.

Also this issue, OBOD Mentor Co-ordinator Susan Jones provides a look at the connections we have with our U.K. brethren. The *Living Druidry* section opens with David North delivering the second in a series on conducting public rituals with an examination of roles. In a further glimpse into Druid-inspired ritual, Raymond Taliesin takes us into the Garden of Gwynedd. Christopher Johnstone then shares how he crafted a magical wand.

Susan Keene tells us how Druidry helped her through graduate school (an intense experience that some of us are still living through!) while Nimue Brown takes us on a journey into Pagan dreaming. Race MoChridhe expounds upon the Bard as a peacekeeper while Barb Pott reconsiders the spirit of the workplace as a creation and Yvonne Ryves connects us with finding spiritual communities online. As Alder Burns and Isabel Crabtree explore the links between permaculture and Druidry from their California home, Joanna van der Hoeven engages in a deep green spirituality in the North Sea.

In *Ask the Green Thumb Gurus*, Alec Mayer helps readers obtain information on plant identification as well as traditional and alternative methods for getting rid of garden pests. Shelley Keneipp provides a list of ingredients found in vaccines to help readers become more aware of the potential for harmful side effects. Nancy Wisser, one of our amazing artist contributors, spends time with the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania.

The *Eisteddfod* section boasts beautiful poetry by Wanda C. and Erin Rose Connor as well as an engrossing tale by M.F. Harding on being an Earth pilgrim. Gail Nyoka profiles a storyteller as celebrant, Abegael Fisher-Lang of Vancouver. Congratulations to Milo Bennett Burdine, our writing contest winner this issue. Check out his story of the forest dweller. Cathryn Bauer was the runnerup with her journey through the circular room. Many thanks to guest judges Kathleen Harrington and Nimue Brown for helping us choose between the great stories we received. Let the new prompt for the Winter issue help your Bardic talents shine!

We also learn the secret medicines of our kitchen with a review of and excerpts from Ellen Evert Hopman's recent book. Eliana and Jasmyn, both 8, brighten the magazine with their drawings. In the *Around the Americas* section, our own head of research, Clint Chamberlain, tells us about the new seed group he helped form in Texas. Plus, Jason Stieber shares his first experience of the East Coast Gathering. Finally, our dear friend Wanda C. returns to share her Druid journey in the *On Being An American Druid* section. Thanks to all the artists, Sophia Kelly Shultz, Anne Hammond-Tooke, Nancy Wisser, Brom Hanks, and Madz Starz, for illustrating the magazine with beautiful shots from around our land.

In the next issue, we take a look at the intersectionality between the Dharmic traditions, esp. Hinduism, and Druidry. We will also celebrate our artists by looking deeper into their spiritual lens, and welcome the pending return of spring! May the fire of inspiration keep you warm through the long night until then.

Yours under the Oaks,
Renu /|\

Renu K. Aldrich, M.A., LMFT, also known as the Hindu Druid, has been a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids since 1998. She is a doctoral student at Virginia Tech, where she specializes in working with developmental trauma survivors and studies how to incorporate Eastern healing techniques into Western psychotherapy. Initially a journalist, Renu also has served as a communications executive in the publishing world, in academia, and on Wall Street. She launched Druid Magazine in 2015 in service to the spiritual community.

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Information contained in this magazine is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any chronic disease or emergency condition. Information, incuding recipes and remedies, is not intended as a substitute for advice from your physician or other health care professional. Please consult with your physician or health care professional before taking any medication yourself, or giving medication to your infant, child, or other member(s) of your family. Before consuming herbs and supplements, please consult with your physician or healthcare professional, and carefully read all information provided by the manufacturer, including the label of any homeopathic remedy.

OTHER OBOD PUBLICATIONS

Touchstone **~ for members only**

SerpentStar **~ Australasian & Oceania**

Dryade **~ Dutch**

Il Calderone **~ Italian**

Druidenstein **~ German**

Menhir **~ French**

Donald M. Kendall Sculpture Gardens, Purchase, NY

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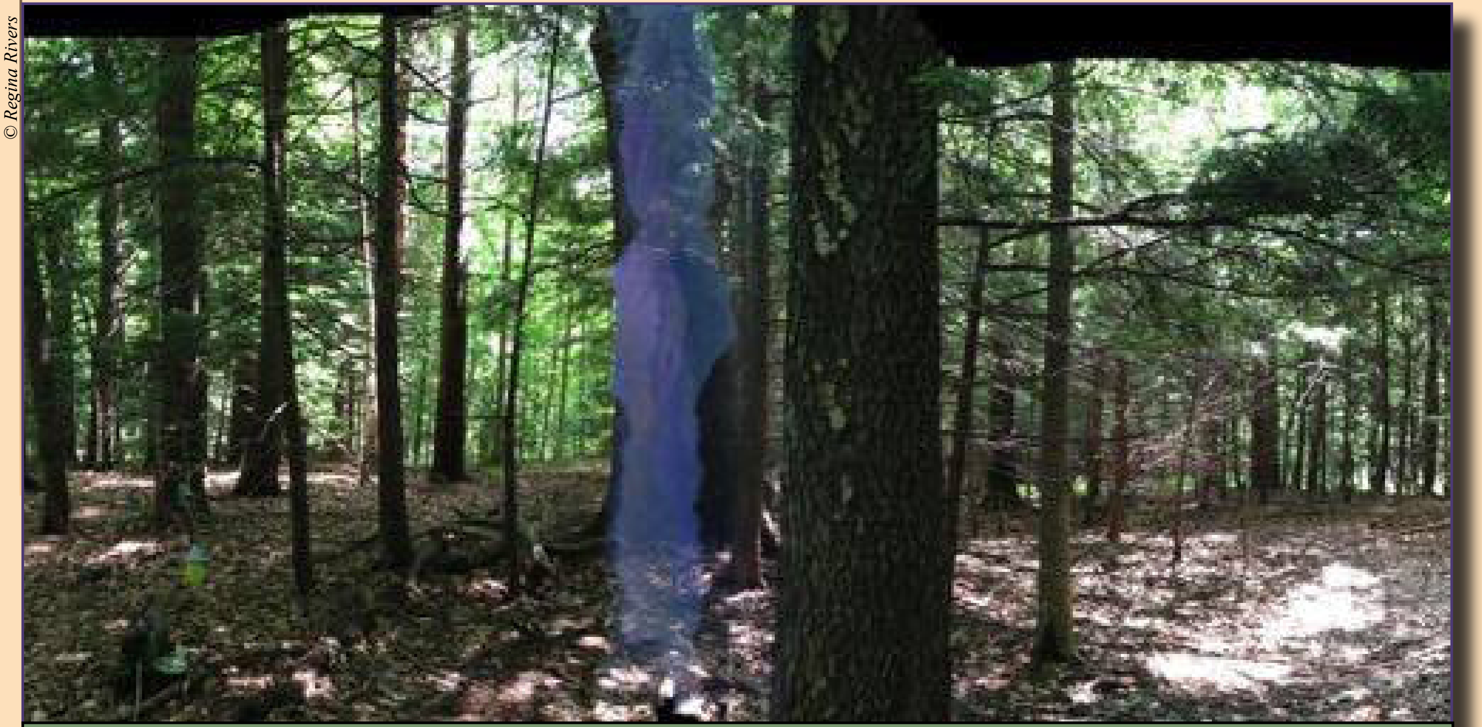
NEWS FEATURES

TREE SPIRIT

BY REGINA RIVERS

© Regina Rivers



In the earthy hollow of an ancient tree stump, I had just set out our offering of crystals, lavender, rosebuds and other sundry items for the Faeries with my friends Kathy and Victoria. A wee jumping frog appeared in time to affirm our presentation while we three held hands and sang to the land and to the Fae who care for it. As we continued along Lily Dale's Fairy Trail on July 18, 2015, we happened upon a tree somewhat off the beaten path that we instantly recognized as sacred. Captivated, we were drawn to her so we wrapped our arms around her and spoke loving words into her. The moment was magical!

To record this extraordinary experience, I photographed the area. Upon reviewing the panoramic image, we were stunned by what we saw—there, in front of the tree, was a tall, wispy, lavender image. Some image professionals suggest it's a photographic glitch, yet they haven't been able to explain or reproduce the effect. Could it be the spirit of the tree honoring us in return for our offerings? Most who look at it get goose bumps. Some say they see a tall, slender woman looking to the right. What do you see? We welcome your comments!

Regina Rivers, owner of Rivers Healing Arts, LLC, is a shamanic practitioner, relationship coach, energy worker, death midwife, speaker, and workshop facilitator from the Pittsburgh area.

NEWS FEATURES

DRUIDRY ACROSS THE DISTANCE: OUR TRANSATLANTIC BONDS

BY SUSAN JONES

What I most love about being a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids is belonging to the largest international network of Druids. As OBOD's mentor co-ordinator from a corner of England, I have the pleasure of linking members one-to-one with more experienced members across countries, continents, and oceans. It's a remarkable network, and about half my correspondence is with OBOD members on the American continent. But how did these transatlantic bonds develop?

© Sophia Carr-Gomm

SUSAN JONES

There have been American members since the beginning of OBOD. In the early years, beginning in 1988, Philip and Stephanie carried out the tutoring, replying to individual letters from members. In 1994, two more members helped out, one for the Bards and one for the Ovates. The following year, this team expanded to five people who met at the OBOD Office in Lewes to develop ideas for further building the system of mentoring to support OBOD members at every stage of their journey through the course. Since then, mentoring has developed and expanded. Now, there are 50 mentors, of whom half are in America and Canada. All have completed the journey through all the grades of the OBOD course. All are invited, trained, and tested, and they give their time free. OBOD members have different mentors in each of the three grades. So a member in America might be in contact with mentors in the United Kingdom, Europe, America, Australia, or New Zealand.

As I'm writing this, I'm on a train travelling over the estuary just south of my home. At the water's edge, among the horizontal white shapes of gulls, a vertical shape stands out—a little egret. Looking more closely, I can see maybe a dozen. It's the first time I have seen so many in this northern part of England and I wonder about climate warming. The stranger sitting next to me is looking out of the other side of the train, seeing other things and having other thoughts. Earlier, we had an interesting conversation.

We'll be going separate ways soon, perhaps to meet further on—or never again. It seems to me that the relationship between OBOD member and mentor has something of the quality of those conversations we sometimes have with fellow travellers. Our journey is shared, but our experience of it is unique. And the transience and anonymity of encounters between strangers can lead to some fascinating exchanges. I love those conversations.

A question that sometimes comes up with OBOD and Druid travellers in America is, "Is it different or harder to be a Druid in America than in Britain?" I can only speak from my experience of OBOD members. Let me pick out three factors that illustrate the nuances between the connected pathways of America and Britain.

First, yes, there are differences in our use of the same language. It's useful to know that your 'quite' is our 'very.' And that 4th August 2015 is your 8/4/15 whereas it's our 4/8/15. But these differences are seldom a hindrance. That your sidewalk is our pavement, your cookies are our biscuits, and your pants are our trousers adds flavour to language, not hindrances. Besides, it would be wrong to assume that two people using the same vocabulary imbue it with the same meaning. Perhaps a broader issue is working itself out. A fundamental aspect of our human nature is to want to be understood and to understand. Talking about spiritual experiences is something little practiced in everyday conversation. OBOD Mentors do it all the time with deep interest and ex-

© Cathryn Bauer

Susan Jones with Druid Magazine's Chief Researcher Clint Chamberlain
Gulf Coast Gathering, 2015

perience. Between them, they have 400 years of experience. I believe there is a value in these conversations. Making an effort to communicate spiritual experiences makes us understood to someone else, and partly—perhaps—to ourselves.

A second factor influencing Druidry in America is your geography. America is huge, which makes meeting other Druids a challenge. Many Americans assume that here in tiny Britain there are Druid groups in most neighbourhoods. However, the majority of OBOD members worldwide are solitary by choice. Only a small proportion of members attend groves, camps, and gatherings. I have been lucky enough to visit and run workshops at both the OBOD East Coast Gathering held in Pennsylvania and Gulf Coast Gathering in Louisiana. But with concerns about the cost and carbon extravagance of any sort of long distance travel, getting together with other Druids remains a rare treat. Fortunately, there is plenty of other help and ways to stay in touch. OBOD provides online discussion forums (ably managed by a transatlantic team of Selene, Art, and Owl in Louisiana and DaRC and Bracken in the United Kingdom), a helpdesk for Bards, a massive website, Damh's Druidcast podcasts (now broadcasting its 101st edition), Touchstone, a Facebook page, and of course there's Stephanie, Annie, and Damh on hand at the OBOD Office in Sussex. In addition, there are Facebook groups where members connect with each other.

Being a Druid on American soil has some advantages compared with our landscape across the pond. The animal most associated with the North is the bear. Many North American members know exactly what it is like to share their habitat with bears. In Britain, we don't. Bears have been extinct here since the ice age. America still has wilderness. In Britain, wilderness is hard to find. Grass roots environmental interest is perhaps stronger in the United States than in Europe. In Louisiana, I was impressed by the master naturalist program, which trains people to be stewards of the natural environment and to teach those skills to others. There is nothing similar in Britain.

A third factor marking the difference between American and British Druidry is the cultural one. Some might assume that there is an advantage to practicing Druidry in its heartlands of Britain and Europe. The spirit does not so confine itself. Any sort of spiritual practice can have its challenges, wherever we are. In some parts of America, the practice of Druidry must sensitively take into account the legacy of white supremacy in the South, indigenous spirituality in the North and West, and a stronger churchgoing habit across the country than in the United Kingdom.

For many in America, Druidry provides the spiritual connection to Celtic roots that some have spent a lifetime yearning for. But perhaps more significantly, the OBOD course fosters an understanding that, wherever we are on our planet, so is Druidry. Druidry is in the Earth beneath us, the sky above us, and the sea all around us.

American OBOD member Kurt Swanson wrote this to me recently in a discussion we had on the subject of Druidry in America:

"For Druidry to be of deepest meaning and significance to me and my community, I need to learn directly from the land on which I was born and raised. I have felt your land during my time in the U.K., and it feels very different from the land that I live on. Both lands are magical and mysterious, and both offer much adventure, but our geographies, plant life, animal life, weather, and the subtle energies differ quite a bit. Sitting quietly on one land results in feelings very different than those that arise while sitting quietly on the other land. Having said this, I certainly do not believe that Druidry as expressed in the U.K. (or anywhere else) has little value to North American Druids. Moreover, I believe that Celtic stories, poetry, music, legends, and myths contain globally universal truths and wisdom, and we can all treasure them and learn from them regardless of our heritage. However, I do live in North America, and for Druidry to have the deepest meaning possible for me, I feel it needs to arise from the land here. I want to be taught how to learn Druidry and in the process 'come into my own medicine' as indigenous North Americans might say. Direct revelation is necessary, and this, I believe, is best achieved through direct relationship and intimacy with my immediate surroundings."

That is Druidry, wherever it is on our planet. It unites us, it does not separate.

Susan Jones is the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druid's Mentor Co-ordinator and oversees course support for OBOD members worldwide. She likes all things American, except iced tea.

© Anne Hammond-Tooke

© Renu K. Aldrich

Berkshires, MA

FROM SAMHUINN TO HALLOWEEN: SEEING THE OLD WAYS IN THE NEW

BY WANDA C.

Mankind has long been both afraid and yet fascinated by death. For eons, nearly every culture has revered gods and looked to appease them so that their people can live as long as possible. Some have tried to immortalize themselves through paintings or sculptures, hoping to capture the essence of their physical bodies or their souls through mud, clay, and color. Others have looked to the medical community to replace parts of their limited physical bodies, and still more look to freeze themselves in hopes that, in the future, society will have discovered the cure to their currently incurable disease or illness. Yet, all face the same fate, we die. We will all die just as all things do. But is it truly death of our energy, our souls, or is it merely the physical body that decays and falls away, transitioning back to the earth just as our spirit transitions to a new plane of existence? This is the age old question.

© Wanda C.

Wanda C. with the 3rd Psychic Eye as the Witch in the Cave

Samhuinn means the summer's end in Gaelic ("Samhain," n.d., para. 6). This means the end of long, hot days and the beginning of the darker half of the year. The Celtic New Year is a time for us to remember and visit with our ancestors. We set a place for them at our table as a way to welcome the return of their spirits as the veil thins; we share tales of our memories with family and friends alike. This is the time for hibernation; so many creatures on this planet enter into a deep sleep, transitioning from the appearance of being alive to seemingly dead. This one aspect of the darker half of the year's approach is most apparent with the falling leaves, the withering plants and vegetation, the cooling of the nights, and the frost on the ground—chilling to the very bone.

How did Samhuinn become the crazed madness of Halloween? Have we lost all meaning of what it represented to the commercialism of the holiday today? How do we take it back or bring back the old ways? The answer, of course, is not just in reading, learning, or even in the telling of the old stories, but it is with doing—the consistent practice of what we hold dear and sharing that with others is how we keep our traditions alive. This is how we breathe life back into the Day of the Dead, Dia de los Muertos.

Many Pagans celebrating our ancient holiday feel that society has lost the real reason of its importance and the understanding of what and why we celebrate Halloween. Many people all over the world are aghast and appalled at the commercialism that has taken its hold in the United States. I can't blame them, but I have realized many things by watching Halloween become bigger and crazier than ever and by listening to both sides. We can't go back in time or turn back the clock; we can only go forward. Getting angry or ignoring the divide between Halloween and Samhuinn is not the answer. The only way forward is to tackle the big commercial beast head on. The first thing to do is to take a step back and truly look at what is going on.

Identifying Traditional Threads

Americans have remade Samhuinn into Halloween as they have with other holidays. As part of a nation that developed mostly from immigrants, families brought differing traditions, beliefs, and practices to this country and shared them with others, with some blending together. Many Native American traditions and beliefs have also been incorporated into today's society. Even if it is hard to ascertain which tradition is originally from which culture or land, there are remnants and fine strands of many different beliefs all mixed together in one big cauldron of a holiday. This is the first step to reclaiming the old ways—understanding that many of our traditions of this blessed time of the year are still here; they are just obscured by the craziness. Halloween itself has become so big it is rivaling Christmas for the biggest holiday, both in celebration and in revenue. Amazing!

© Wanda C.

Wanda C.'s Halloween treats

Why is that? I believe it is our fascination with death for one. For another, many people who have children want to see them have the same childhood memories that they experienced. In essence, what they are really doing is perpetuating the same traditions, just in a grander, larger scaled version, and they are incorporating traditions from friends and from other parts of the world now that we can access information about almost any culture through the Internet.

The Evolution of Holidays

So, how do we go back? We don't; we go forward. Sometimes we think going forward is not always a good thing, but even in doing so, we experience transitions. Take a look at the jack o' lantern, how it has come from the punkie turnip to the more modern carved pumpkin. The tradition of carving it for a lantern is still in existence and, in fact, it has become more intricate. Now we also have fake pumpkins, called Funkins, which we can carve and keep from year to year. Trick or treating (begging for candy) is much the same as it was, although we have moved from fruit and homemade goodies to store bought candy; different types of food are given, yet it is still done to keep the mischievous spirits at bay. This meaning has been nearly lost, but the tradition is still there. The amount of candy sold in years past has been astronomical; however, today, it is becoming healthier and taking a turn towards being more mindful of those who are not able to eat candy or who have allergies that we are now more aware of. On top of that, healthier options are being offered as an alternative to sugar due to its harmful and addictive effects. In this transition, more people are giving out pretzels, snacks, coupons for movies, stuffed animals, or other novelty items instead.

The big issue in the commercialism of Halloween to tackle is the amount of props being sold, bought, and tossed. That too, is changing. More people have become so captivated with this spooky time of year that they are creating haunted houses and scenes in which to scare others and have fun. Now, you would think that this would be a boon to commercialism, but no. That might have happened at first, but these people, now termed 'haunters,' are coming together to share ideas and they are turning away from buying props and badly, cheaply made commercial items. They prefer to make props themselves. On top of that, they are taking our trash—yes, our trash. They are creating and repurposing junk from garage sales, flea markets, and even from the dumpsters, preventing these items from ending up in our landfills and oceans. I find that pretty amazing.

Now what purpose does a haunted house, more generally known as a 'haunt,' serve? Well it would depend on the haunt and the owner. Many of these places are being set up for charity, for example, Halloween for the Homeless and Haunt for the Hungry. In some cases, a percentage of the proceeds are going to charity. They also bring in youth and give them something fun to do while actually teaching them skills. Haunts keep alive more traditions than haunters may even realize, and they also serve for a safer way for us to face our fears, whether it is of death itself, spiders, zombies, or whatever sends chills up our spines. It gives us a chance to scream and then laugh at the whole thing. We all know none of it is real and, yet, we all love to be scared. It keeps alive the mystery and eeriness of the time of year when the darkness prevails and lasts longer than the light.

Many symbols of Halloween constantly

evolve, even the traditional image of the witch. The lovely, elderly woman in the cottage who was warm and kind and knew herbs and the way to heal people became the green, wicked, ugly witch who cast spells to harm people. Today, she has become beautiful and wondrous again, sparkly at times; she has become the healer and the shaman, the lover of nature, revering the Gods, and is shown to be more welcoming and helpful to those in need.

One thing we must realize is that nothing stays the same. Change is constant. Evolution and progress will go on, but just how it does, what form it takes, and how we see that progress is completely up to each of us. The Druidry of today is not the same as it once was. We have all been influenced by other faiths and beliefs as well as the way the world is today. The modern holiday of Halloween has been influenced and is rooted in the Samhuinn of yesterday in addition to the Samhuinn of today.

© Wanda C.

Video of Wanda C.'s cauldron creep

Connecting with the Old Ways

This is the way forward to bring back or to teach and share the old traditions; how we as a Pagan community can become more accepted. This is the holiday, the one above all where it is possible. This is the time where we have the ways and means right here before us to enhance today with traditions of old, and it has become a passion of mine. We still celebrate many of the traditions of old, most people just don't know why or the reasons. So it becomes a great opportunity to teach and to share the old ways in order to bring about an understanding and to help our kids continue with the traditions that we want to pass down.

I find it very difficult to change the mind of a grown adult in today's society. Most are firmly set upon what they were brought up with, unless they have been able to break away and decide on their own; it takes a lot to convince someone or help them to be more accepting of traditions, ideas, or thoughts that are different from theirs. People tend to fear what they do not know or understand. They shun and condemn, and their fears can lead them to commit unspeakable acts, harmful and hurtful ones. So how do we make this world more tolerant, more accepting? To me, it is through the children that we can make our tomorrow better than today—children, who are more open and loving and forgiving. Children are our future.

So how do we plant the seeds within our children? We teach them with fun and understanding. Halloween can be the crossroads where we can transition to bring back the old ways by progressing it forward again, making it anew by connecting it to new ways. Halloween has become a time when kids can pretend to be anything in the world that they want to be. They can be their hero, play out the scary figure, or be just whimsical and fun, like a grab machine or cartoon character. They still come and cry out "Trick or treat!" They can be mesmerized by the displays at people's houses. In my personal experience, kids are honest to the point of even turning away candy when going through a haunted garage for the third or tenth time. They want to see all the wondrous things within, even if it scares them the first time.

Children are inquisitive and want to know how it works or how it was made; when they do, they are no longer afraid of it and instead, love the illusion. They then share this fun tradition with their friends and family. It doesn't matter what their faith or religion may be, many still come and are enchanted by the world they see as they celebrate this last harvest of the year. These are the memories they remember, the spooky house or how they had gotten so scared that one year, but knew that next year they wouldn't be afraid—they can face it. They may remember movie time when they gathered upon a curb across the street, cupping a mug of hot chocolate with melty marshmallows as they sat together to watch the projected videos of their favorite animations and scary scenes and learned of this incredible holiday called Halloween. They will remember laughing and being mesmerized as bits of history were presented and interjected with fun videos and music, much like Schoolhouse Rock taught us as kids when presented as a commercial in between our cartoons on Saturday mornings ("Schoolhouse Rock!," n.d.). Some of us learned multiplication tables (MrRiggyRiggs, n.d.), about conjunctions (dawemmy, n.d.), and even how a bill becomes a law through those animated features (Upholding the Constitution Since 1987, n.d.). I am sure some of you are singing those songs in your head as you read this! So, too, can kids today learn then between the fun animations, and with them, about the traditions and history of Halloween.

They can learn what Samhuinn really means, who Druids are, and about the Celts; what is a pentagram and why do you go trick or treating

© Wanda C.

HERITAGE
CEMETERY

Outside Wanda C.'s former house in Texas during Samhuinn

or carve pumpkins; how Mexico and Japan celebrate, or how ancient Egypt celebrated. Ray Bradbury's book, *The Halloween Tree* (1972), was even made into an animated movie for kids (Piluso, 1993). It taught the history of the holiday and tried to explain why we do the things we do at this time of the year—all wrapped up in a great story. Each attempt to teach children about the old ways, even if not 100% correct, still brings about awareness and, thereby, acceptance to this mystical time. Halloween, such a marvelous window of opportunity, is there waiting to be seized upon!

For those who would rather a simpler solution, just the telling of spooky tales around a bonfire or late at night with a flashlight shining under our faces, or keeping the tradition of trick or treating and decorating our homes, is teaching and keeping the old ways alive. Additional ways include reading relevant books or sitting with kids to help carve jack o' lanterns out of pumpkins. Also, we can take this time to remember family members who have passed by sharing memories and honoring them by visiting their graves, which could mean cleaning them of debris or leaving an offering.

Far too many people who have put negative connotations upon this time of year have tried to shut it down and stop others from celebrating or even remembering its origins. It won't happen, however, for Halloween is alive and well and it's growing—ever changing and transitioning.

Samhuinn is a great solid foundation, and it is up to each of us to unveil it and merge it more with Halloween. We, as Druids, can help to present this holiday, our New Year, our time to prepare for the darkness, and promote understanding, acceptance, and tolerance and all by just the sharing of our own traditions with those around us—especially with the children around us.

At this time of year, remembering our past by celebrating it in the present, and lifting the veil of darkness, will make tomorrow a brighter place.

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Wanda C., also known as Wanda Ghostpeeker, is a Druid with the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids. She is an avid traveler, Halloween/Samhuinn enthusiast, and writer. Her Halloween blog is http://underthecrookedhat.blogspot.com.

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Westchester County, NY

PHILLIP EMMONS ISAAC BONEWITS

BY IAN CORRIGAN

(Editor's Note: *The followng was Ian's eulogy for Isaac. This tribute pays homage to a key figure in American Druidry five years after his death.*)

I write today to celebrate the life and mourn the death of Isaac Bonewits, 20th century occultist of note, Pagan and environmental activist, author, bard, humorist, and family man. Isaac has gone too young, but will be remembered fondly and with honor by more people than he, himself, could know.

Personally, Isaac has been a part of my life in one way or another for most of it. I met Isaac's ideas as a 16-year-old occultist when I purchased the first edition of Real Magic while on a hitchhiking jaunt. Raised in a small city in Ohio, the first big-city 'occult shop' I ever saw was in Toronto, and there I held the first edition of Real Magic (Bonewits, 1972). The book was perfectly timed to speak to the gang of boomer occultists coming up right then, and it has more influence than is often admitted.

I met Isaac in 1984 in central Ohio when we attended the first WinterStar Symposium, which was held by the Association for Consciousness Exploration (ACE), which also presents the Starwood Festival). He had returned to the Northeast and had spent the early '80s working with a small study group in New York City developing a new ritual order.

© Phaedra Christine Bonewits

Isaac and Phaedra Bonewits, 2008

This new group, Ár nDraíocht Féin (ADF), was based loosely on his Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA) roots as well as on his direct research into ancient Pagan ways. When he attended WinterStar that year, he made his first direct announcement of the formation of ADF.

Over the years, Isaac and I became friends and, I might hope, even colleagues. In the small-things-that-make-life-cool department, I consider this one of the honors of my life. As a chum, Isaac was clever, generous, a fine raconteur, a supporter of homemade music, and an open-hearted guy, and interested in new people. He was flexible and adaptive with his ideas, and our many chats and debates about mythography and ritual, magical theory, and Pagan culture changed and shaped both of our ideas.

Let me tell you more about my friend...

Isaac and Paganism

Isaac was a man of ideas, especially as concerned practical, spiritual, and magical art and religion. At heart, Isaac was a Pagan. A lover of nature in all its forms, including human nature, he loved the Old Gods and the Old Ways. He was not only a freethinker and an experimental occultist, but he was also always concerned about bringing back the worship of the Gods in modern times. This troubled him through his interaction with the various RDNAs, which included many secularists and universalists. Isaac's determination led him to produce several variations on his idea of Neopagan Druidism, and when his ideas finally met the emergent Pagan festival culture they found fertile ground at last in ADF.

© Phaedra Christine Bonewits

Isaac Bonewits
Oct. 1, 1949 – Aug. 12, 2010

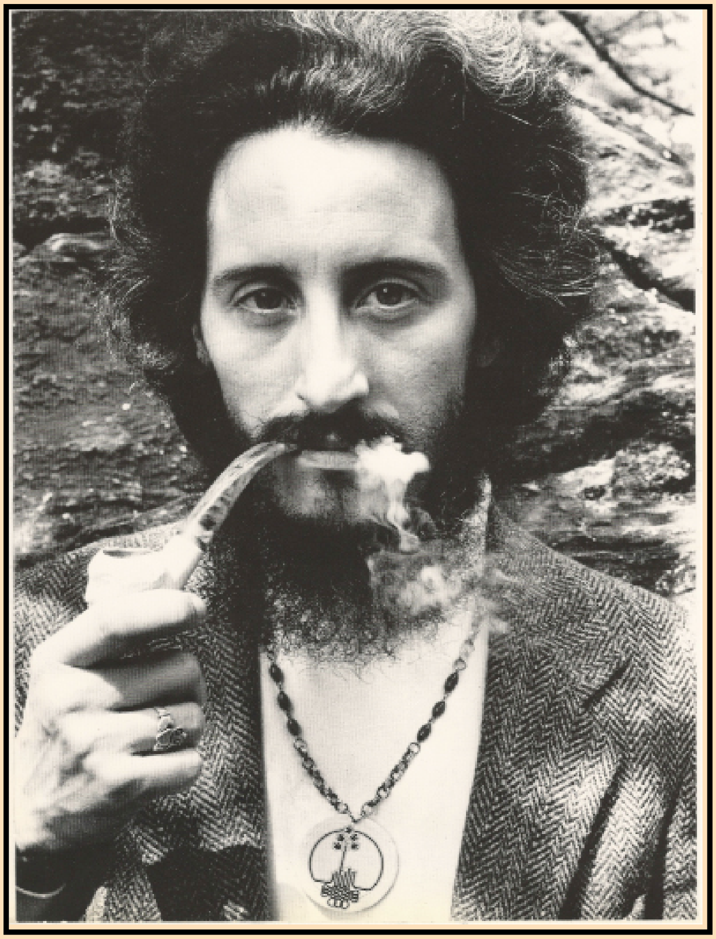
Public Pagan organizing was always Isaac's goal. Beginning with his mildly famous degree in Magic and Thaumaturgy from UC Berkeley in 1970*, he strove to be a public face of the growing Pagan and magical movement. In this he largely succeeded, becoming a well-known speaker at events and gatherings as well as the author of several more valuable works on the state of Neopaganism in the early 21st century. ADF continues Isaac's vision of providing reliable, inspiring public Pagan worship in cities all over North America.

Isaac was a part of the effort by Llewellyn Publications (now called Llewellyn Worldwide) to total support of and participation in the Pagan scene. During the early '70s, Llewellyn's Gnostica News was providing the best occult, witchcraft, and Paganism periodical content available. Isaac's years as editor of Gnostica made it relevant to the growing Earth Religions movement.

Isaac considered himself a Druid, but that didn't prevent him from writing, teaching, and practicing a variety of other Pagan ways. Real Magic, his first book, is broadly theoretical and relevant to everything from Wicca to heathenry, and in many ways it is Chaos Magic ahead of its time. Isaac's personal spiritual adventure included Druidry, neopagan Witchcraft, and a variety of other cultural experiments. Isaac's later writings ranged from energy work and Pagan anthropology to historical and descriptive surveys of modern Pagan traditions.

Isaac & Druidism

While Isaac always valued his roots in RDNA, it was by creating his own system and organization that he was able to have his greatest influence on Druidic Paganism. In the nearly three decades since Isaac founded ADF, we have steadily pursued his central goals for modern Paganism.



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Isaac valued real scholarship and intellectual honesty. He helped build a Paganism that tries to keep track of what is really known about the Old Ways and adapts to new knowledge. He chose to set aside discredited scholarship from the early 20th century and work from the best modern sources. Isaac had an optimistic view of human nature, and he felt that formal and professional organizing and institutional growth could only benefit Paganism in the modern world. He developed a church model that has helped ADF grow in a careful but steady way into one of the largest Pagan religious organizations in the world. Isaac hoped to build Pagan organization and spirituality that could transcend its founders, surviving into the future. That he has surely done.

It was typical for Isaac to focus on work and results, on thaumaturgy rather than mysticism and theology. He invented his liturgical outline and gave it to Druidry with a bare minimum of theological constructs. From the basic symbols and ritual tropes of that outline, we have built a working system of Pagan worship. Isaac's patience and his wise choice to refrain from 'writing a religion' have helped his system to grow organically and produce good spiritual fruit.

Isaac was always collegial and open-minded, valuing different viewpoints and interested in new inputs. Over the years, he worked with many colleagues to refine and rework his outline based on experiment and result. Isaac never resorted to a fixed dogmatism, but remained interested in real effects in the real world.

Under Isaac's direct leadership, ADF survived its first decade in a pattern of modest growth, building organization and spiritual depth. When the time came, Isaac stepped aside and allowed the organization to find its feet without him until his return as an honored emeritus member of ADF's clergy and spiritual work. Since his departure as our formal first officer, his vision, plans, and specific teachings have remained a central guide of ADF's growth.

Isaac's name and ideas will be remembered in ADF. We'll remember with affection his humor and wisdom, his compassion, and his effort. We'll remember with honor his work to establish our ways, his strength in the face of criticism, and the wisdom of his initial designs. We'll remember with reverence the core spiritual and Pagan ideas that still light the heart of "Our Own Druidry."

Isaac's divine patrons were the God Dagda Mor and the Goddess Brigid. May they receive him into a fate fit for a hero of the Old Ways.

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Ian Corrigan has been a part of the Neopagan organizing and festival scene since 1979. He was a colleague of Isaac's in the creation and development of ADF's rituals and symbolism.

Isaac Bonewits Timeline

✧ 1949: Born in Royal Oak, Michigan

✧ 1966: Joins the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA); Enrolls at UC Berkeley (For a fun footnote, see My Satanic Adventure, c.1970)

✧ 1970: Earns degree in Magic & Thaumaturgy, UC Berkeley*

✧ 1972: *Real Magic* is published

✧ 1973 – 75: Serves as editor of Llewellyn Publications' *Gnostica News*; Founds the Schismatic Druids of North America and the Aquarian Anti-Defamation League.

✧ 1976: Founds the New Reformed Druids of North America, Berkeley

✧ 1983: Founds Ár nDraíocht Féin ("Our Own Druidry" in Irish; ADF). Manages the organization through its first elections and the development of successful groves.

✧ 1996: Resigns as Archdruid of ADF (Later named Archdruid Emeritus)

✧ 2003 – 2007: Period of authorial creativity:

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**Isaac remains the only person to have ever received an academic degree in magic from an accredited university.*

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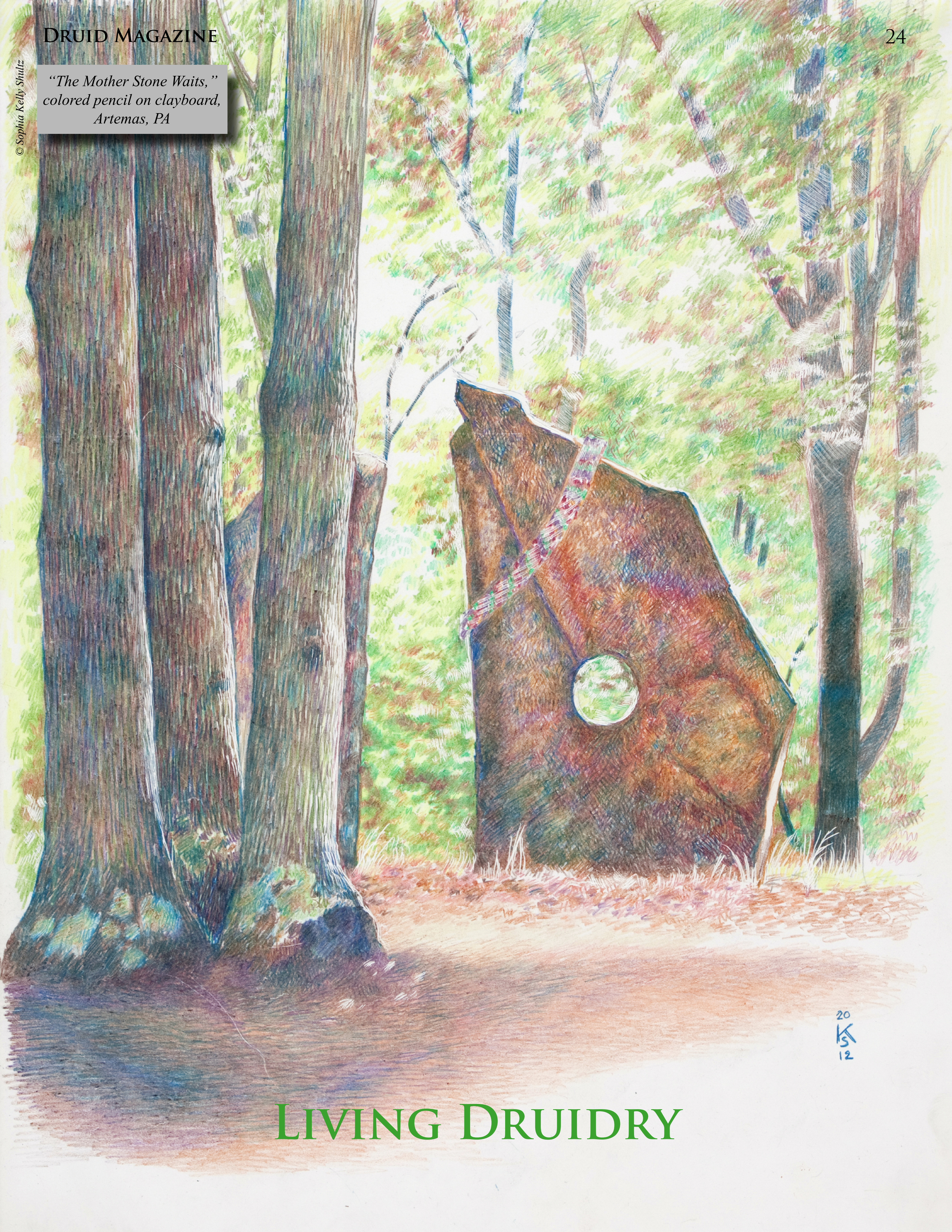

"The Mother Stone Waits," colored pencil on clayboard, Artemas, PA

LIVING DRUIDRY

Public Ritual Workshop Part II: Ritual Roles

By David North

In this, the second installment of the public-ritual workshop introduced in the first issue, we look at some typical roles that could be used when performing a Druidic-influenced ritual. I would like to emphasize that the philosophical and stylistic choices described here are merely some of many options: Whether or not the number, names, or descriptions of the roles described here appeal to your circumstances, you might consider the types of activities and responsibilities described when planning your own format.

© David North

New Moon altar, 2015

We use seven "basic" roles: *Druid One*, *Druid Two*, *Herald*, and the cardinal directions of *East*, *South*, *West*, and *North*. More experienced or senior ritualists typically perform the first three roles because they are more involved in both depth of performance and spiritual practice. In addition to these basic roles, it is fairly common for one or more unique role to appear—for example, the May King and Queen at Beltane, and the Mabon at certain seasonal celebrations—but this workshop focuses on the generic. While many people will feel attracted or attuned to a particular role or cardinal direction, it can be beneficial to stray outside one's comfort zone and experience new roles—especially in a public ritual setting when one may be called on to fill in for another.

Druid One is the primary actor, performing most of the magical works. *Druid One* lends personality to the ritual, and with the Herald, helps keep the rhythm and flow. Many in Druidry, including our group, shy away from the notion of *Druid One* as priest or priestess: The ritual leader's role is not to stand between the worshiper and the Divine as intermediary, nor to interpret the nature of Deity for the worshiper. Instead, *Druid One* facilitates an environment of place and circle where each participant may more fully experience their individual perceptions of, or relationships with, the Divine.

Druid Two provides support by anticipating Druid One's needs, often cueing the ritual's main events. *Druid Two* can frequently assist the Herald in prompting those who miss their parts or in gracefully correcting (or enabling!) deviations from the planned script. In a nutshell, *Druid Two*'s role is to make Druid One look good!

The **Herald** is an understated role but key to the ritual's success. The *Herald* serves as the "book ends" of the ritual by preparing the ritual space beforehand, ensuring celebrants have the information and materials they need for a smooth experience, and returning the ritual space to its original condition afterwards. Those in the *Herald* position must have a solid grasp of the script and the physical environment, simultaneously: They help keep the ritual on track by cueing individuals who miss their parts, while also keeping an eye inside and outside the circle for matters of safety. The *Herald* is prepared to intervene should an undesirable situation arise—including curious onlookers or potential intrusions when a formal outrigger or guardian is not present.

The four directional roles invite the spirit(s) associated with their respective quarter during the ritual opening, thank them for their presence at closing, and provide the magical perspective of their quarter throughout the ritual. In the OBOD tradition:

- **North** is associated with the Great Bear and the magical perspectives of earth, winter, death, and rebirth.
- **West** is associated with the Salmon of Wisdom and the magical perspectives of water, autumn, maturity, and wisdom.
- **South** is associated with the Great Stag and the magical perspectives of fire, summer, vitality, and passion.
- **East** is associated with the Hawk of Dawn and the magical perspectives of air, spring, youth, and life's promise.

Our group's philosophy is that those performing the roles of *North*, *South*, *East*, or *West*—unlike the Druid roles—take on the persona of their respective totem or spirit to the best of their ability, channeling that energy into the circle. Whatever the Great Bear, the Great Stag, the Hawk of Dawn, or the Salmon of Wisdom means to them, the individuals speak as if they are that being and attempt to convince everyone else in the circle of that fact!

How does your group interpret the main roles in ritual? Do you follow a similar format each time, or is each experience unique unto itself? If you are inclined to try an exercise, explore some of the roles or elements that speak to you; perhaps within your sacred grove or meditative space. See how different roles resonate with you. If one or two stand out, explore them more deeply: Visualize the essence of the role and interact with its spirit or totem if you feel comfortable doing so, and if it is appropriate for your journey.

Next issue—Part III: Ritual Theory.

David North is an Ovate Grade member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, and, with his wife Nicole, is a co-organizer of the Northern Virginia-based Seed Group of the Oak and Eagle. He participates with the public ritual team and authors or edits many of the group's rituals.

IN THE GARDEN OF GWYNEDD

BY RAYMOND TALIESIN

Many Druids acknowledge the strength of land, sky, and sea during ritual, with fire seen as a transformative power. However, when my Druid group gets together at the quarter and cross quarter days, part of the expected process is the calling of the quarters. This practice, commonly associated with Wiccan rituals, evokes the four basic elements of earth, fire, water, and air–in an amalgamation of the Wiccan/Druid practice called "Druidcraft."

It is also common practice for the spirit of the God and Goddess, and the spirit of the people present, to be acknowledged as well upon turning toward the center. In the British Druid Order-affiliated primitive Gorsedd I belong to, we call to the spirit of the God and Goddess and the people present in this way:

> "Now let us enter the Garden of
> Gwynedd
> To the place of the center, well of
> spirit we bring to this rite
> To Cerridwynn's Cauldron, crone
> wisdom of night
> To Brigit's bright well of poet's insight
> To Ogham's sacred grove of growth
> and light
> May all within this circle know the
> power of your blessings."

In this case, Gwynedd refers to an idealized state of mythic thinking, named in honor of the ancient kingdom of Gwynedd in what is now Wales—not the actual northwest section of Wales currently called Gwynedd. The Garden of Gwynedd is meant as a state of mind, aware in all five or six senses; it is an ecstatic state of sacred perception, observing the middle world, as shamans would call it, the world we live in.

As Yvonne Owens put it in her book *Journey of the Bard* (1997):

> Gwynedd is not only a grove but a walled garden, a sacred well, a glass castle and many other archetypical, heightened perceptions. Gwynedd is, itself, a state of heightened perception or clarity. Through it, the world is changed, and a realm glimpsed which is parallel to and coincides with this one. It is the power of magical sight, an altered vision of the seemingly mundane. (p. 37)

From this heightened state of perceptions, the true harvest of magic and wisdom that nature offers can be felt. It is a state of openness to beauty and inspiration. We call out to the legendary figures of Cerridwynn, Bridgit, and Ogham to represent a trinity of transformation, inspiration, and knowledge. We evoke these ancestral, Celtic Goddesses and God in the hope that their names will summon up mythic meanings and, perhaps, genetic memories to help us harvest the wisdom of our ancestors and the wisdom of the legends from which modern Druidry stems.

Being in this "state of Gwynedd" mentally and spiritually makes us more open to the awe, beauty, and even the magical essence of the world we live in. This is tantamount to the spirit of modern Druidry. Using the idea of three worlds present in one, we can make associations with land, sea, and sky: Gwynedd becomes the middle world (land), and Annwn the lower world (sea)—also the land of the Faerie, the land beneath the hills, or the land to the west as we see in "The Voyage of Bran, son of Febail" (Immram Bran maic Febail, the old Irish legend). In this context, Abred is the upper world (sky), a state of learning to better oneself or become more enlightened (Ab Ithel, 2007). Admittedly, Iolo Morganwg was no historian, but his works were very influential and have had an impact on some of modern Druidry. This model allows us to recreate the cosmos to some extent, for the purposes of contemporary rites, and the soul awakening that comes with it.

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Raymond Taliesin is the acting priest for the Caer Cormorant Gorsedd in the state of Washington and one of the Bards of Turtle Island. Check out his Pagan Radio Show at wheelofwonder.blogspot.com

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Berks County, PA

MAGICAL CRAFTING

CRAFTING A MAGICAL WAND

BY CHRISTOPHER JOHNSTONE

© Chris Gorman

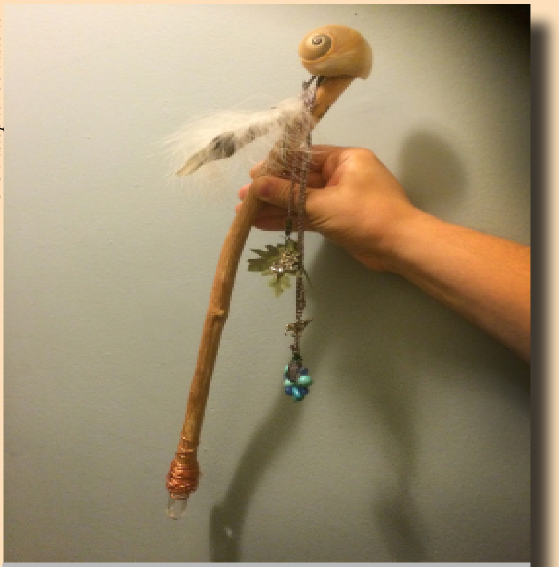
Wand being used during a Beltane ceremony

It was a snowy, winter day in December when I decided to visit my sacred oak tree on my parent's century-old farm. It was a tree I had found as a child, and being over 100 years old, I knew in my heart that my great-grandparents likely sat beneath this tree on this same large stone. It remains my place of solace and comfort. As I sat beneath it, meditating, gazing, and observing the many strong branches, I realized it was the right time to find a magical wand. I reached up and held the chosen branch in my hands, sending love and thanks to the spirit of the tree. I then gently cut the branch to the length of my forearm (elbow to tip of middle finger) as was suggested by what I have read during years of research into wand-crafting. When I returned home, I stripped the bark from the branch and placed it in the windowsill to bathe in the sunlight and moonlight until I was ready to decorate and consecrate it.

Many moons passed, and it was on a beautiful day in May during a divination workshop that my dear friend, author, and teacher, Tiffany Lazic, informed me that she wanted to host a wand creation workshop at her spiritual center in Kitchener, Ontario. When she told me she was conducting this workshop, I was beyond thrilled! It was synchronistic divine guidance. The Great Spirit was saying "Ok, Christopher, you must get on with the creation of this wand. It is time!"

Upon arriving at the Hive and Grove Centre for Holistic Wellness (a magical center that also offers Pagan, Druid, and Celtic books, gifts, and items for sale) Lazic had us sit with our bare wands on our laps. One woman brought her staff, and we were informed that it is a larger form of a wand that holds an earth-meets-sky energy. She then walked us through a guided meditation to allow us to set an intention or vibration that the wand would hold for us. She asked: What goddesses, gods, animals, or spirits came to us? What elements or colors? What symbols or shapes came to mind? The meditation was beautiful as so many wonderful things came up for me. I had an unexpected memory of my playful childhood dog Rex, who came to me as a reminder to open up to the magical child within me as I create this wand. In my visions, the Goddess Brigid came to me, and her message was to be strong and to honor the roots of my family homestead, the wheel of the year, and the transformative stages of life. I envisioned sitting beneath the great tree. In my vision, there was an energetic glow in the space where the branch was cut. When I was young, I would sit beneath the great branches of this Oak tree, wondering what brought me there. Through my studies of Druidry and this meditation, I realized that I had been waiting a long time for this gift of the tree branch. It was worth the wait.

Behind us on three large tables, Lazic had laid out a myriad of objects and crafty items: crystals, stones, flowers, charms, trinkets, feathers, seashells, coils of yarn and wire, leaves, sparkles, fabric, fairy items, and so much more. On the side, she had a glue gun, a wood burner, scissors, and various tools and cutters for working with wire and wood.


© Christopher Johnstone

Oak wand with elemental details, seashell handle, and Lemurian seed crystal tip with copper wire

When the meditation ended, we each went off in our own directions to craft our creations. While working, we listened to soft Celtic music and remained focused on our task so that we could hold our visions. My creative flair came out. There were only three of us in the workshop, but we all had something powerful to offer each other. We all worked in magical silence, crafting our wands (and staff) like little worker bees, devoting our attention to them and adorning them with items that had meaning to us. Every now and then, we stopped to giggle, share a memory, or help each other with the hot glue gun and wire cutter. It was like we were dancing freely to music, letting our bodies speak through movement. I wrapped a crown of leaves around my head and “dressed the part.” It was so much fun! The magical creative child had come out.

We crafted for about two hours and then gathered in a circle at the front of the room. We all had big smiles on our faces, and each person took a turn at sharing and telling the story of their creation. It was amazing how the goddesses Ceridwen, Blodeuwedd, Rhiannon, Arianrhod, Branwen, and Brigid answered our call. Interestingly, Lazic observed that the three new magical instruments combined with her own wand each represented a different element—water, fire, air, and earth. After sharing, we sat in meditation, chanted, and consecrated the wands with water gathered from sacred springs in Glastonbury as well as dew gathered from the stones at Stonehenge.

My wand was of the elements of fire and water, like Brigid, and I adorned it with a seashell, feathers, and a ring of blue stones. On the handle, I placed a triskele for the triple deity aspect. On the tip, I placed a Lemurian lightning-struck quartz crystal for fire energies and glued it on with the wax of a Brigid's flame candle lit from a candle-keeper, who passed it along from the original in Kildare County, Ireland. After this, I wrapped it in copper wire to secure it.

In the end, I was very happy with my wand as an extension of me and as a special magical tool. Although wands are magical, they do not have to be elaborate. They can be simple branches with one small symbol or none at all. They can be colorful and vibrant or natural looking. They can have a single purpose or many purposes.

A wand is a part of you and a great tool for visualization in rituals, adding an extra dimension while envisioning the sacred circle in your grove.

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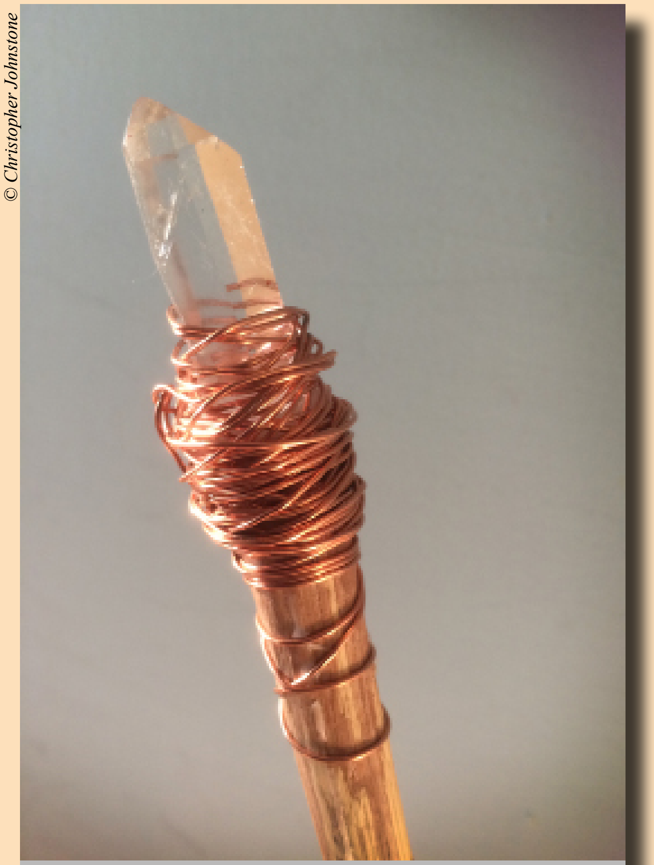

© Christopher Johnstone

Wand detail: crystal tip with copper wire to represent Brigid and fire

Christopher Johnstone is a graphic artist, spiritual director, and holistic practitioner based in Toronto, Canada. He is a graduate of the Transformational Arts College of Spiritual and Holistic Training and is a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids.

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ENTWINING PATHS: HOW DRUIDRY GOT ME THROUGH GRAD SCHOOL

BY SUSAN KEENE

Psychology: from the Greek words Psyche (soul) and Logia (study) (Harper, n.d.). The study of the soul. It's an apt description. I have spent the last four years (and more money than I care to relate) obtaining a master's degree in mental health counseling. At the same time, I have been studying OBOD's courses on the Bardic and Ovate levels. These two pursuits support each other in deep ways; as I learn to feed and heal my own soul so that I can help others feed and heal theirs.

On my first day at Antioch University, one of my instructors introduced us to the concept of the "wounded healer." Many of us, she conjectured, chose this path of study due to damage we had incurred during our lives. This is applicable to me. I grew up with an unhappy, alcoholic mother who did not understand her bookish, questioning daughter. I was bullied in school and abused by two husbands, and I have suffered from depression for most of my life. With the help of a wonderful therapist and the deep soul-feeding wisdom I find on my Druid path, I am better, and I know I can use this experience to help others learn to heal their own souls.

© Susan Keene

SUSAN KEENE

Even though my spirit longed to learn the craft of therapy, I had a long hill to climb in studying for a master's degree. I obtained my bachelor's degree a the month before my 50th birthday, having returned to college in my late 40s as my children reached adulthood and I had time and energy to devote to developing my own life. But the middle-aged brain, even one as curious and intense as mine, does not retain information as well as a younger one would. In order to study and do this work, I used many basic techniques that I learned from Druidry.

Grounding and centering came before intense course work. My study ritual included lighting a candle and setting my intention. A few moments of reflection on what I hoped to accomplish allowed me to shift my focus from my day-to-day activities to learning the skills and studying the information I would need to become a therapist. When studying became too tiring, a round of the light-body exercise would restore my spirit. Even better, I would go outside, lie on the earth, or literally hug a tree.

Nature is a great restorative. In mental health training, there is great emphasis on learning to care for ourselves; absorbing so much negative energy from others all day can be damaging to our own psyches. Druidry gives me great paths to self-care.

Besides reading and writing many, many papers, a large part of my training as a therapist came from practice therapy sessions with colleagues. These involved pseudo-therapy and role-playing with classmates as I worked my way up to seeing actual clients in the school's clinic and eventually in my internship at a community mental health center.

I was pleasantly surprised by the tie-ins between my clinical studies and my Druid practice while I learned about working energetically with my clients. So many practices in Druid ritual come into play in the therapy office. We speak of "creating a container" and "holding space" for our clients so they may feel safe when sharing intense feelings or being vulnerable with us. I recognize these as forms of creating sacred space and holding energy as one would during a ritual, as in casting a circle or chanting Awens over a circle member who requests healing. The feeling I get in a good session with a client is exactly the same feeling I get during a ritual, one of connection and deep meaning.

Near the end of my course of study, I was required to spend a quarter semester studying a single psychological theory in depth. I chose a course in Jungian theory, and found the work truly in line with my Druid work. Carl Jung believed that we are all connected to one another through what he called our collective unconscious (Jung & Storr, 1983). I learned that we can use this concept as a guide to healing: I attune myself to feel my clients' energies down to the level of physical discomfort. I was amazed to learn that I can catch their emotions and sensations and reflect them in my own body, allowing me to help them interpret what is happening in their souls. While this is a great boon to healing for the client, it can drain and be harmful to my own psyche if I am not careful. Grounding and shielding are useful Druidic concepts that I put into practice every day so as not to allow my clients' problems to bleed into my own life.

The OBOD course materials make many references to Jung, and I could write an entire volume about the overlaps between his theories and my Druid work. The two paths dovetail perfectly. During my academic classes, my classmates and I meditated, conducted tarot readings, and learned healing techniques through the production of art. I loved the congruence I felt between my spiritual life and my professional life. The Awen truly flowed that quarter!

In the end, I find that Druidry calls upon me to be fully human in a way that makes my role as a healer easier to fulfill. I am called to live in harmony with nature and the earth in a way that leads to happiness on a deep level. Humans evolved living in nature as part of tribes that nurtured and protected one another. We spent our days outdoors, immersed in nature, using our muscles to make our livings. Today in Western civilization, we spend our time isolated either in nuclear families mainly or even living alone without knowing our neighbors. Our days are spent mostly indoors, sitting in chairs, and staring at screens. No wonder depression and anxiety are so common.

While I am not romanticizing the sometimes brutal lives our ancestors lived, I do believe the pendulum has swung too far the other way. Imagine a pet dog, who, rather than living with his family and getting to play fetch and having his belly rubbed, is forced to spend all of his time caged in a kennel. He would become anxious and depressed if not rageful. In fact, videos passed around Facebook show animals touching grass for the first time after spending their previous lives trapped in cages, changing their lives and their behavior. I believe our modern lifestyle, which goes against our evolutionary nature, contributes mightily to the depression and anxiety that plague our society—not to mention anger, lack of patience, and disconnection. Nature has great power to heal. Perhaps modern Druidry can point the way to a balance, where we can have modern conveniences such as sanitation and healthcare as well as time in the great green world and the fellowship of our tribes. Must we spend our days isolated, plagued by spam, always being given the message that we don't measure up? Or can we use modern technology to be in touch with one another in encouragement and love?

I am excited to finish my studies and start my new career. I know that my Druid practice will always be there to refresh and inform my psychological practice and vice versa. What a joy to have a life where I can use my spirituality to help others become whole.

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RE-WILDING YOUR SLEEP

BY NIMUE BROWN

The following is an excerpt from Brown, N. (2015). Pagan Dreaming. Hanks, UK: Moon Books.

Sleep is an innately natural activity, answering a most basic need of our animal selves. It might seem odd therefore to suggest that sleep could need a re-wilding process, but it does. For most of us, sleep does not answer the needs of the animal self, and is more akin to something battery farmed than something free range, much less something wild. Understanding the ways in which our sleep is not wild challenges a great many norms in modern living.

All mammals sleep, and so in sleeping we are connected to them all through shared experience, just as we are connected to all other humans, too. It is worth reflecting on how much is shared, how much we have in common with other living things. In understanding our commonality we are better able to empathize with each other, and to act with compassion. Recognising this commonality is radical, in a culture that encourages us to see everything as a potential commercial resource, including other people. Our exploitative culture creates artificial boundaries; chains of user and used that have little to do with natural food chains or ecological systems. If we see ourselves as part of the world, and more the same than not, we take a step closer to wildness.

NIMUE BROWN
PAGAN
Dreaming
THE MAGIC OF ALTERED CONSCIOUSNESS

© Moon Books

In sleep, we are all much the same, and it makes us all equally vulnerable, regardless of species. Our titles, bank balances and worldly goods can't help us much. We are in many ways more real and exposed by sleep than we might choose to be when awake. The dreaming mind is both less willing, and less able to lie to itself. Thus our fears, desires, hopes and motives can be uncomfortably exposed by our dreams. Equally we might welcome and delight in that insight, and we might value and appreciate what we find within ourselves. The shaming, devaluing opinions of others might also be revealed as illusions by our sleeping selves.

When we sleep and dream, we enter a profoundly natural and necessary state. However, it is a mistake to see dreaming as some kind of primitive wilderness, inherently trustworthy, innocent, and separate from our waking lives. We bring our minds with us when we dream. All that we are, know and do, the material context of our existences, our beliefs, assumptions and the culture we belong to will all influence us as we sleep. Our attitude to sleep can leave us with unnatural sleep patterns

Statistics for the UK suggest that about 80% of people do not get eight hours sleep a night. [It's much the same in America: "Sleep deprivation is such a rampant problem that last year the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called insufficient sleep a public health epidemic" (Goldschmidt, 2015, para. 3)]. It might be tempting to see as inevitable the tension here between what is natural, and what is part of civilization and progress. There is nothing innately wrong with the idea of civilization. Without it, I could not write these words and no book or ebook would exist for you to read. All that is best about humanity is expressed through the civilizations we have constructed. However, it is equally true that our worst and most destructive habits are also bound up in our civilizations. Greed, hunger for power and control, violence, cruelty, destructive urges – we have hard wired all of these into our laws, politics and habits at various times through our history. Our assumption of a fundamental right to use and consume informs so much of what we do and how we mistreat each other and our habitat.

Civilization does not have to be at odds with nature and it is not inevitable that civilization requires us to live, and sleep, in unnatural ways. Not all historical cultures have been at war with the natural world, not all contemporary cultures are inherently destructive. We could construct societies that seek to work in harmony with the natural world. We could choose to favor cooperation over competition. We could collectively decide that quality of life for all is more important than profits for the few. By its very nature, any given civilization is a construct, and there is always scope to build something different.

© Nancy Wisser

Lynn Township
Lehigh County, PA

To move away from all that is worst about current human cultures, while managing to keep the good bits, seems like a challenging but feasible aim. We need to collectively give up on greed and the desire to wield power. We must learn to co-operate with each other, with other living things and with nature as a whole. Without these changes, we are likely to make the Earth uninhabitable for our species, which is hardly a wise strategy! Thus the personal meets with the political, and the microcosm of our lives is revealed to be a reflection of a much bigger picture. How we relate to nature is intimately connected to how we relate to the nature manifest in ourselves. If we can respect nature within ourselves – for example by learning to respect our own need for sleep, we become better able to respect nature in other forms, too.

To talk about re-wilding your dreams, is to consider changing your life, and by extension the culture you inhabit. If we all change, everything changes. I do not believe in the idea that changing consciousness magically alters everything – we will not save the world by a few of us praying or meditating. However, when changing your spiritual practice changes your day-to-day life, and requires others to question what they do in turn, then there are some real opportunities for radical shifts.

To re-wild your dreams calls for changing your relationship with self. There are a great many things we might do to re-wild, some of which [is explored in this book]. As we all exist in relation to each other and the wider world, we cannot change what we do without also creating ripples of change in other areas of our lives. Changing our relationship with all that is beyond self, inevitably has vast consequences for the individual. Re-wilding dreams will not put an end to climate change and extinction, but the process of seeking a wilder experience will nonetheless take us in that direction. We are part of a vast web of life, after all. No action can be separate from the whole.

You may well find that it is not currently possible for you to do all of the things that might re-wild your dreams. Any change you make is worth making, this is not an all-or-nothing scenario. Do what you can, know what you cannot do and why, and take that journey one step at a time.

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Nimue Brown is a British Druid living not far from the Romano-British temple site of dream god, Nodens. She's a prolific author and blogger, and further information about her work can be found at www.druidlife.wordpress.com.

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THE BARD AS PEACEKEEPER

BY RACE MOCHRIDHE

I never feel more fully engaged in the OBOD's work than I do in the monthly peace meditation. As time goes on, I begin to suspect that the whole of the Order's Druidry is microcosmically contained in this one clear and simple ceremony—a holographic imprint of the entire course.

However, as I approached my first peace meditation, I wasn't sure what to expect. I live in the United States, the most militarized country on Earth, and was chaptered out of its armed services for conscientious objection. To be working in even this still and subtle way for the cause of peace seemed to me tremendously important but, at the same time, rather daunting. I had, after all, personally witnessed the incredible power of the forces working against peace. It seemed like something that would demand all the skill and resources of an ancient and wizened Druid, such as one encounters in the old Irish stories, and here I was, a lowly Bard, taking my seat upon a pile of rocks in the wood. I had been trained to make lethal shots with an M4 carbine at 300 yards; the metaphorical harp was feeling a little underpowered by comparison.

I took a few minutes just to focus on my breathing and to settle into the space before speaking the first line of the Druid's Prayer for Peace aloud, and I began to think of the things that keep me from finding peace within myself—the things that still churn me deep inside. They are mostly memories, loose threads of an incoherent life that seem to catch on everything I encounter and unravel me. I stare around the floor of my psyche at little piles of yarn, each color alone, the memory of their pattern already faded. Which pile am I? This red one: the pile of a man who signed an enlistment contract and went off to earn his crossed sabers? This blue one: the pile of a man who found Jesus amidst the horrors he saw and refused his orders? Both, of course, but the warp and weft that bound them as I lived them are gone. Such things go easily once even one loose string has caught the burr of guilt, or regret, or anger. We are left like sleepers without blankets on a cold night, clutching a solitary string.

So I thought of my role as a Bard, with a stock-in-trade of stories. Stories are how we entertain one another, inform one another, educate one another, and also how we make sense of things. They both connect and contextualize. In his Mount Haemus lecture, Ian Rees (2015) examined the Druidic approach of E. Graham Howe to psychotherapeutic practice. He gives the example of how we normally deal with the memory of a situation or encounter that went poorly:

> [. . .] either we decide that they are right and we are wrong, holding

> a sense of badness within us, which resolves the immediate situation but can damage our relationship with our sense of self. Or we decide we are right and they are wrong. In this instance we become good and they are perceived as bad. This does violence to the relationship with the other and our sense of connection beyond ourselves. The third, druidic way, of the triple spiral, is an act of profound peace-making which values all aspects of the experience, and allows the energy held in the tension to generate new creative solutions. (Rees, 2015, The Ovate and the Three-fold Way section, para. 11)

This third way is what I needed.

In the same lecture, Rees writes that "bards are concerned with making the past present" (2015, The Ovate and the Three-fold Way section, para. 7). It was in this brief observation that I perceived at last the power of the weapon I now wielded. In the moments that I lived through it, my experience was one. Everything that happened was related to everything else. That is the way life is. In our minds, however, we imagine life could be other than it is. We replay events again and again and weave new, fantastical scenarios in which this or that choice had been different, in which this or that piece of information had been available. The truth is that such speculations are both wild and futile, though they may seem alluringly plausible at times. We weave them, desperate to find the one that might have ended without our grief, or shame, or torment; and yet, even if we could find it (and we so often can't), what good would it do us? It would still be a road not taken.

All this is a process that works only upon what is past; when life is happening, we have no time to unravel it. The Bard,

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Morning of spider webs,
Four Quarters Interfaith Sanctuary, Artemas, PA

in making the past present, lays our frayed strands back upon the loom and enables us to see them whole as life again—a context in which we can more readily perceive the good that has come from the bad, the necessity that was hidden in the accidental, and the justice in mercy and forgiveness toward others and ourselves. The Bard's unique contribution to the broader Druidic art of peacemaking is in telling the stories that integrate our pasts and, in doing so, integrate us. And perhaps, I thought, if I could learn to tell such stories about myself, I could learn to help others tell them, too.

The air was warm and still, and I sat upon this wish for a long time, like a hen upon an egg. At last I got up, turned to the center, and raised my arms to hatch that wish: "May there be peace throughout the whole world." In that moment, I was connected to all the Druids and Druidesses performing the ritual that day; I sensed the power and significance of what we had done together. For whatever had happened the day before, or in all the days before in the long, foreboding sweep of history, it was now a prologue to a story in which men and women everywhere laid down their burdens to pray for peace. Peace was the image of the tapestry made from all our blood-stained threads. And to see it was peace, indeed.

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Race MoChridhe, a Bard in the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, finds his Awen in the courses of the stars, the needles of the pines, and in the pages of the Bible. His writings may be found in numerous Pagan magazines.

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RECONSIDERING THE SPIRIT OF THE WORKPLACE

BY BARBARA A. POTT

In The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium (1998), theologian Walter Wink argues that all entities from photons to supernovas and from large corporations to mom-and-pop operations—and even Little League teams—have a spiritual aspect to them. For Wink, that means that every one of these entities has an aspect of the divine within them. In this article, I explore the notion of the workplace as an entity with a spirit of its own, a spirit that is part of the spirit of the universe (Wink's divine), and what it might mean for our own spiritualties as workers in it.

WORK ZONE BEGINS

© Barbara Pott

Entering the work zone encourages one to leave behind all non-work related thoughts

The culture of a workplace is something most noticeable when we first meet a new employer. We compare our new workplace to our last employer, perhaps noticing that the communications are more or less open than we've experienced in the past. We sense that our new co-workers seem more open and honest as a group, or more closed off and defensive. These few hallmarks indicating the culture of the organization reveal an underlying spirit. In a dramatic attempt to develop a positive spirit within a company, Dan Price, CEO of Gravity Payments, announced earlier this year that none of the company's workers would make less than $70,000 per year, the dollar figure said to be the base for happiness in the workplace (Cohen, 2015).

Usually, a dramatic spirit of a workplace plays out in a negative light, sometimes in a way that yields public reflection: "On the heels of Enron and Sarbanes-Oxley and the subsequent birth of the ethics consulting industry, conversations around the value and place of spirituality in the workplace have been further encouraged by the need for managers and leaders to behave more ethically in the world and to foster ethical decision-making in their workforces" (Rhodes, 2006).

Likening the spirit of an organization to an angel, Wink (1998) writes that working for change in our organizations when they've gone awry "…does not depend on casting out the demon, but recalling its angel to its divine task" (p.6). It takes constant vigilance and sometimes risk by the individuals within the organization to recall the spirit to a healthy and noble way of being. If Enron had paid attention to its own spirit, perhaps it would still be in business.

Do Organizations Have a Divine Task?

In Living with Honour: A Pagan Ethics (2007), Emma Restall Orr proposes a theory of how all entities come into being from nature. For a Druid, or other nature-centered spirituality, this can mean from the divine. While she doesn't mention them, this theory can be applied to human organizations: everything is energy; energy moves with a directive that is intention, the "weave and web of intentions is consciousness. Drawing energy into cohesive form, moving upon a current of intention, it allows for the potential for life" (p.55).

And so an organization is born. That humans create them make them no less a part of the natural world, for we who are human are acting within our nature. Separating human acts and human organizations from the rest of nature contributes to the pathology the we suffer from; human beings are somehow not authentic members of the natural world. As an example, beavers create dams and cause flooding; these dams don't create themselves, but we can see that whole scene as nature taking its course. So is it with humans and our created organizations. I realize this implies at least a measure of divinity within the human spirit. I believe this is so.

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Some workplaces require constant human interaction such as in this restaurant area in downtown Ann Arbor

© Barbara Pott

Campus office building at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Floor upon floor reminds one of the hierarchy of many workplaces

Spirituality At Work

One day, a college basketball coach asked me how her role as an aggressive leader in a highly competitive field could be congruent with a spiritual life. I considered nature, as we Druids do, reflecting on the very competitive nature of life itself. I responded by saying that the expression of one's own nature is necessary for living an authentic spiritual life. It won't do for her to try to suppress her innate competitive nature and then expect her spirit to blossom. There is no reason, and it doesn't make sense, for her not to accept and integrate her whole nature into her spiritual growth.

Well-placed competition is good for human development and good for the spirit. Even in the more run-of-the-mill jobs, such as mine and perhaps yours, we sometimes find ourselves compelled to excel because we are competing with our own past efforts, with a co-worker for a promotion, or even just that day's pat on the back. On the other hand, like any element of human nature, competition can be destructive. In the coach's case, it's the integration of her spirituality with her competitive nature that keeps it all on a positive path toward her own development. To apply it more broadly, it's the integration of a healthy spirituality with one's own innate human nature that provides us our best vehicle for self-development. This is what OBOD courses seek to foster in each of us.

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This office building on the University of Michigan campus, Ann Arbor, evokes a feeling of a quieter, non-harried setting to in which to work

Underscoring the importance of spirituality in the workplace, Howard Gardner at the Harvard Graduate School of Education "has described spiritual leanings as one of several critical measures of intelligence" (Rhodes, 2006, para. 4). The ability to develop one's spirituality and apply it at work is now being seen as a competency in the workplace.

One of the aims of the OBOD Bardic course is to "help your Soul express itself fully in the world… by helping you discover the sources of your creative power, so that their gifts can flow fully in your life" (Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, 4th para.). Most of us spend much of our time at work so we can't afford to leave our work life out of this equation. Creativity in all its forms—in competition, negotiation, analysis, sales, communications, and many more—are talents we have through which we can discover and express the sources of our innate creative power. "The Powers That Be" are not, then, simply people and their institutions… they also include the spirituality at the core of those institutions and structures" (Wink, 1998, p.6). Collectively, we are the spirit of the workplace and we are, indeed, the creative *powers that be* at work.

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Barbara Pott is a Druid Grade member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids and a human resource professional. She insists that we can no more hide our spirituality (as opposed to religiosity) in the workplace than we can our personalities so it's best to be intentional about it.

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Echo Bay, NY

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE:

NOVEMBER 30, 2015

FINDING SPIRITUAL COMMUNITIES ONLINE

BY YVONNE RYVES

I never intended my spirituality to be online. There have been times in the past when I would have chosen for it to be other than it is, but I have no choice because of where I live. When I reveal where I live, I am sure that some of you reading this will be astounded that I say that, but it really is the case. Although there are, I believe, other Pagans in the locality, there is no real Pagan community. Many of my friends, students, and clients, albeit with Pagan tendencies, are in actual fact Catholic. Likewise, there is no nearby seed group or grove, nor to my knowledge do I have any other OBOD members or Druids living within easy reach.

So where is it I live then? I live in Southern Ireland. Now, I am aware that many of you reading this are in America and I also know that the chances are quite high that you are now either dismissing my claims completely or gasping in surprise, but if I may ask you to suspend your disbelief for a while, I will explain.

I live as far south in Ireland as it's possible to go. Yes, I am lucky enough to have a stone circle about 45 minutes by car from where I live, and the land is rich in terms of how I am able to connect and work with it and the spirits that reside there. However, I am at the opposite end of the country to Newgrange, Knowth, the Hill of Tara, the Boyne Valley, and Kildare, where Druid College is based; it is in these areas of the country where Druid groups can be found. To reach those parts of the country would involve a long drive and possibly overnight stays.

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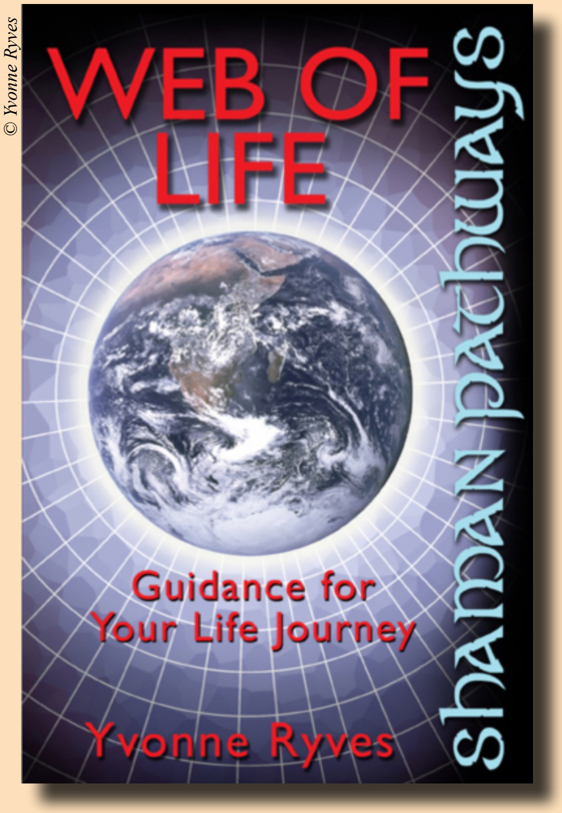
Yvonne Ryves

In terms of joining a community, I have much the same problem as I know many in the Americas do. Like many others all over the world, I seek my support from wherever I can find it, which, in reality, is online.

When I initially signed up for training as a Bard with OBOD, I had hoped that in doing so I would find a real live community; what I found instead was an online community both on the OBOD forum and also on the various Facebook pages that are run by members of OBOD. The forum gives me a space where I can share and discuss my work, both successes and problems. Facebook lets me connect with others either training in or interested in Druidry. Recently, I was accepted as an Ovate, and I am delighted to say I have now found someone else in much the same position as me, albeit in a different country, with whom I can share aspects of my Ovate journey. We communicate via private messages and email, but, at last, I feel as if I have found a friend.

I am an author, and my publisher, Moon Books, works with Pagan and shamanic authors, so I have another community from whom I can learn. We, too, have our own online community, and by discovering and reading books written by other authors I can see how they work and compare that with my own journey. This expands and extends both my knowledge and my practice, and it stops me from becoming stale or frustrated.

Another unexpected online spiritual community is that of the blogging world. Just over a year ago, I decided to start a blog to give me a place to share my thoughts, ideas, and indeed my journey. I call it Solitary Path, which really reflects how both my work and my spirituality are for me. Through this, I have found a rich source of others who share their spiritual paths—Pagan, Druid, and Shaman—in all their forms. Through the comments section on blogs, we talk, support each other, share, and connect.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It is difficult for me to purchase the tools and supplies I need for my Druid practice, and, here again, the Internet provides the answer most of the time. There are one or two shops I visit in nearby towns, but their stock is small, so getting what I need can be hit and miss. Most of what I buy comes from overseas, usually the United Kingdom to avoid problems with customs. Once upon a time, I made and sold shamanic drums. Postage costs and the fact that hides and frames are not available anywhere in Ireland meant I eventually stopped, but, as with everything else, when I was making them I researched online and found good sources—sources that produced the supplies I needed in a spiritual manner, often even created in ritual and ceremony.

Having said all of that, I actually believe that being solitary in my practice and having to find my support online is a blessing in many ways. Working alone means that I can develop my own ideas, beliefs, rituals, and ceremonies without having to fit into anyone else's way of working. I can allow myself to be guided and follow my intuition without it being a problem for anyone else, and I can let the energy of where I live, the spirits of the place, and my own guides teach me as well as help me to learn and grow.

The online world then gives me a place where I can connect with others in order to build a community for myself, but, and this is important, only with those whom I choose. I can be selective and discerning, decide whether to get involved or watch from the sidelines. I can dip in and out if I wish without having to make any excuses or explain myself. In no way would I ever say that the spiritual groups I am a part of online are inferior in any way to anything in person, but they are different. Online groups and groves, like their physical counterparts, have their own rules, ways of operating, and focus for ritual and celebration. By exercising discernment, I can shop around and find something that suits me rather than trying to fit into a group or grove simply because they are nearby. The benefits of spirituality online by far outweigh the disadvantages, such as not being able to meet in person.

Online spiritualism is the only way it is possible for me to learn, work, and have a community. It is what keeps me sane, helps me to grow, and provides me with a network of support. My network of support is spread around the world, making it more varied and exciting; I am nothing if not eclectic in learning. I see solitary practice as being not less than communal practice, but different, and for me I have learned that it is a perfect way to practice.

Yvonne Ryves, an Ovate Grade member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, is a practicing shamanic healer, energy healer, and trainer living in County Cork, Ireland. She is the author of the book "Shaman Pathways: Web of Life," the blog "Solitary Path," and 'Shaman Moon,' a column for Indie Shaman Magazine.

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COMBINING PERMACULTURE AND DRUIDRY

BY ALDER BURNS AND ISABEL CRABTREE

Permaculture is a way of thinking that teaches people to create farms, gardens, homesteads, cityscapes, and other sustainable systems using patterns and other information from nature. It's a design science that was introduced by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren in Australia in the 1970s. Here in California, we have created our third homestead together, what in the United Kingdom would be called a small holding. While our homestead is only an acre and a half in size, we live permaculture in housing, food, sustainable power, and water catchment. We not only grow food and herbs for our own use, but we also have applied many permaculture principles when possible throughout the property. In fact, our first cabin was made out of trees from our land, waste cardboard, carpet, and cement. Permaculture is the way we think, like when you immerse yourself to learn another language by thinking in that language. We live permaculture deeply and have for many years. We were not practicing Pagans when we began our course with OBOD, we were homesteaders.

© Isabel Crabtree

Comfrey leaf pattern

It was a natural progression from permaculture principles to Druidry. Once we understood Druidry better, we realized it felt like the missing piece to our permaculture ways—it fit the spiritual side of our daily lives and meshed perfectly with the rest of our principles. We are both very spiritual people, but general Paganism didn't really fit either of us. Starhawk's "The Earth Path: Grounding Your Spirit in the Rhythms of Nature" (2005) came close, but we had just not found a Pagan spirituality we were comfortable with.

Mollison has made mention in his book, "Travels in Dreams: An Autobiography" (1997), that he takes a dim view of religion and "woo woo worlds." He said, "Belief is disempowering. Common sense may be of real help…While cheap miracles and plastic arrowheads are accepted, common sense (and the real-life wonders of this world) are ignored for pie in the sky" (p. 616). But he has been inspired by tribal and native cultures with nature religions. To him, nature religions often are replaced by revealed religions: "The religions of resignation and fanaticism follow those of the nature gods, and man-built temples replace trees and tree spirits" (Mollison, 1988, p. 224). He saw this pattern repeated wherever he went to help people repair ecosystems destroyed by humankind. The most recent several generations of people, when faced with that destruction and the task of re-enlivening a landscape, have come full circle (a natural pattern) back to the nature religions, and they fit well with the physical task of creating a sustainable world.

Many of the principles and ideas that we learned in permaculture are also applicable to, or fit well with Druidry. For example, Ross Nichols' "Druid retreat" looks quite like a permaculture design and could be tweaked just a bit to be both a perfect Druid retreat and sustainable permaculture site.

Trees, a Druid's greatest teachers, mimic the "Core Pattern" that Mollison writes about in his *Permaculture: A Designer's Manual* (1998). This pattern, which looks like an apple core, can be observed in many natural things and is what is meant by "As above so below," allegedly originally stated by Hermes Trismegistus. It's part of what the Druids were and are trying to teach about the world. The modern-day concept of pattern understanding is something that mathematicians, Druids, and Aboriginal peoples all over the world knew about long ago. They used this deep understanding in their daily lives in rowing, navigating, planting, cooking, songs, travel, dance, art, and stonework.

The layout of leaves and seeds in plants are examples of patterns in nature. Pythagorean mathematics and the Fibonacci sequence are two examples of this understanding. Many cultures have deep and long traditions of this concept, as well as permaculture and Druidry. There is information everywhere, and even ancient cultures knew this, understood this, and used pattern to transmit information. Permaculture teaches that to deeply understand the patterns in nature is to begin to think from a holistic and healthy perspective.

As permaculturists first who came to Druidry later, we have seen articles about Stonehenge and other sites that seemed rather silly in their claims that these giant, laboriously made sites were created just to know when to plant crops. Whoever built those sites was not a simple farmer. An archaeologist who does not raise crops may not understand that people who grew food back then would not have needed something like Stonehenge to know when to plant. It's like someone deciding to build a clock the size of Big Ben to tell them when to quit work when the setting of the sun will do just fine. If we understand patterns in nature, we can see that those who built these sites were after something deeper and larger. They were after more precise understanding of their world and the stars above. We don't give enough credit to ancient peoples—they were not as stupid as some seem to think they were. Once we understand something like the complicated and true nature of a Polynesian rowing song, we begin to understand the intelligence of those who came before us and of nature itself.

It is a temptation for many people studying Druidry to practice on a solely cerebral level rather than a practical level, but it is just as important to spend time in nature as it is to have books to read or a grove to attend for rituals. Permaculture can inform our Druidry through encouraging us to get into contact with and learn from the soil and plants (even if it is simply a plant on a windowsill), take a walk in nature, or interact with healthy food in the kitchen.

As permaculture practitioners, we can say that there is another level that people miss if they only do ritual and read about theory. You gain access to another level, another "consciousness," when you have the smell of soil in your nose, dirt under your fingernails, and bare feet on the ground.

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For more information on permaculture

permaculture.org

permaculture.org.au

http://permacultureprinciples.com/

http://www.permacultureactivist.net/

DRUIDRY: A DEEP GREEN SPIRITUALITY

By Joanna van der Hoeven

Working with green and growing things is in my blood. My grandfather was a florist and landscaper who moved to Canada after the war and set up his own business. My mother and all her siblings worked for him, and my father met my mother in my grandfather's shop, and he then became a landscaper too. Our home was always filled with plants and flowers, our gardens inspiring others in the neighborhood. Though I never had any formal training, I always had a knack for working with plants, and very few didn't flourish under my care. My home today is filled with plants in every available space, and I have a beautiful garden outside to share with the bees and butterflies as well as the deer and the birds that grace us with their presence.

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Joanna van der Hoeven

I grew up in Quebec, Canada. I walked through the deciduous forests that rolled across those granite hills of the Laurentian Mountains. I swam in the many lakes and welcomed the brilliant autumn foliage in its bright colours, rich smells, and warm feelings. I have listened and been advised by the great pines that swayed by the stream that was the entranceway to the forest, hearing their whispers in the dead of winter when all others of the plant realm were asleep beneath a cold blanket of white snow. That land filled my soul with a great respect and deep reverence for nature. It is in my bones and in my blood.

I moved to the United Kingdom in 1998, and I have had to learn about a totally different landscape. The energy is different over here, slower, with a deeper resonance filled with the songs of humanity as well as the rest of creation in perpetual motion. The songs of human ancestors, running back through the last Ice Age, fills these islands alongside the song of bird and bee, of otter and seal, of frog and newt. There is so much more of it, the songs of humanity, and the land having been worked for many thousands of years to nourish the human inhabitants. It is a different melody, though the song remains the same.

My Druidry is all about relationship. It is the central tenet to everything that I live by, teach, and practice. When we establish sacred relationships, we find the Awen that is so much a part of Druidry, and which sets it apart from other Pagan paths. It is all about that interaction with nature, with the rest of world, that lies at the heart of Druidry. For that relationship to be honourable, it must nourish all parties involved, creating a harmony in the web of existence. We see our place in

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Joanna van der Hoeven

the web, and we walk its connecting threads with care, for we know that to tug on any one thread will affect the whole. We are inspired by the ecosystems where we live, and we can see how to work with the flow of life that is deeply integrated into that force that sustains us.

Time is spent out in nature every day, either walking in the wild heathlands near my home, listening to the notes of the song that is so different from those of my childhood home. The forests are not the same—there are different trees, some familiar and some not. There are many more stinging, spiky, and thorny plants here than where I grew up in Canada. I have found this out the hard way, by being out with and in them. I learned to have great respect for them, and they inspired me with their lessons. Time is also spent out in my garden, tending my vegetables or flowerbeds, picking herbs for medicine and for cooking, or simply sitting out at dusk as the blackbirds make their final calls, blending in with the first owls to awaken in the ash trees. I hear the call of the deer down my little valley, and the bats begin their nightly rounds between the houses and the trees, while over in the fields across the road the combine harvesters are working late into the evening to get the crops in.

The songs of plants are great teachers: they hold a great wisdom. I have recently begun formal training in Herbcraft, a three-year diploma course that focuses on holistic healing with nature as inspiration. My teacher is an OBOD-trained Druid, and she incorporates much of that learning within her work. Focusing on the cycle of the year, with the different body systems and medicinal plants to treat ailments and support a healthy body. I have learned of the great symbiotic relationship that we have with the plant realm. I now have an even deeper respect for it—plants are not only food and medicine, but great teachers in and of themselves.

It’s hard work to learn the anatomy and physiology of the human body much less study the plant realm. A lot of time is spent simply being with a single plant, sitting with it through sunshine and storm, learning from it, hearing its song, and singing back to it our own song. Great care and thanks are given for these gifts, which can help us to heal, nourish us, and bring us joy in their simple beauty. It really brings home the inter-connectedness of all things on this planet. We have all evolved together in our respective environments, and if we look hard enough, we can find the reason why (which to some might even answer the age-old question: what is the meaning of life?). In hearing this great song, we learn of fathomless soul-to-soul integration that brings with it a deep green ecology to our spirituality. Without plants, we simply would not be here.

There are many myths worldwide that tell the healing tale of plants and their relationship with humanity. Within the Celtic world, we have healers such as Miach and Diarmuid, Airmid, and Brighid. These stories give us clues as to how to work with the disconnection we experience in our world today, and how we can reweave those threads back into a system that is strong and whole. Healing is an essential part of Druidry, most often attributed to the craft of the Ovate, but it is an essential thread that runs through all the grades of Bard, Ovate, and Druid. If your calling is more shamanistic Pagan Druid, then the call comes through the ancestors, both human and non-human, of the green and the stone, the wind and the rain, and the sun and the moon. It is working with these forces, whether they are the spirits of place, the ancestors, the gods, or a combination of all three (and more) that we find true healing and connection. It is all about relationship.

The Druid seeks that relationship with her heart and soul. It is the Awen, the inspiration that pulls her towards learning all that she can about the world in which she lives. She walks the paths through the forest in the deep night, makes her prayers to the noonday sun. She works with plants and animals, knowing that they have much to teach her. She opens herself to hear the song of the world, and in learning that song to hear her own melody, working towards a harmonious whole. We are all connected, we are all related. May we never forget this, and may our work in Druidry always reflect the sanctity of this relationship, soul-to-soul and spirit-to-spirit.

May it be so.

Joanna van der Hoeven is a solitary Druid Priestess who has studied with the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids as well as under Emma Restall Orr. She is the author of several books on Druidry, including The Awen Alone: Walking the Path of the Solitary Druid. She is also co-founder of Druid College UK, a sister college to the one in Maine. Born in Canada, she now lives near the North Sea.

ASK THE GREEN THUMB GURUS

BY ALEC MAYER

Q: Hello, I have been trying to identify many plants in my yard (Lexington, South Carolina) for quite awhile, but am having a hard time being sure. Are there any books and/or websites you would recommend or if I sent a few pics to ya'll, here and there, could you give me the Latin names of the plants? Thanks and many blessings.

Also, I heard I could spray a mixture of water and a little dish washing detergent directly onto plants, such as tomatoes, and it would kill most pests.Would this have any adverse side effects to the plants or environment that you know of? The main problem is the white mite things that leave a cotton-like substance on the plants, like a nest. Thanks again.

© Anne Hammond-Tooke

A: Dear South Carolinian,

There are so many books out there that differ greatly from region to region. A best bet would be contacting your local Conservation Commission as they usually have a base set of texts or a compilation of the local flora. Another great interactive resource is the Facebook group Plant Identification. They have strict rules on how to post so make sure you list the region you are from and keep the post to just plants, no funky fungi! They also don't get into the topic of edibles. This is a great resource though, and you will usually have an answer within a few minutes.

The spray that you mentioned may work as a pesticide, but it sounds more like insecticidal soap. This is more of a deterrent rather than a killer. There are benefits to going this route, but I'd be careful as to which soap you use because some can be detrimental to the plant's health and/or also beneficial insects. You would also need to reapply after every rain storm. Another pieceof advice: Make sure you spray around dusk and try to avoid the flowers so you're not deterring any bees.

© Alec Mayer

Alec Mayer assisting an injured bird, who became his work companion for the day before she flew off

Q: *This year I had 6 beautiful tomato plants and 2 green pepper plants. They were all loaded with blooms & then fruit. However, they became infested with leaf footed bugs (my first year ever having these, also my first year growing here in Florida). I am trying to grow organically but nothing I used got rid of these pests (neem oil, TB, dish liquid, etc.), and my crop was destroyed in a very short amount of time. Do you know of an organic way to control this pest or is pesticides my only hope. Thanks, Ivy*

A: Dear Ivy,

I feel your pain in this as I'm sure every gardener has had a battle similar to yours at one point or another. I'm not too familiar with Floridian growing seasons, but I'm sure it's an interesting one! I personally have not fought a battle against leaf-footed bugs, but I was able to find you some information on them via the University of California Integrated Pest Management site. They state that some management methods would be to keep weeds down to a minimum.

You can also try to use row covers early on in the season to prevent the bugs from laying eggs. In addition, you might consider looking into buying beneficial bugs as there is a parasitic wasp that will lay its own egg inside the eggs of the leaf-footed bug, thereby removing the problem and reducing the population for you. There is always physical removal, although that can be rather time consuming. I hope this helps, and I wish you luck in your future growing seasons!

ASK THE GREEN THUMB GURUS

Are you a Druid whose thumb is grayer than green? Do you have plant or garden questions only a qualified Druid can answer? **Submit your questions** now!

Alec Mayer is an Ovate member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, along with being a member of the Mystic River Grove of Massachusetts. He is the greenhouse manager at a local garden center, which has been voted the most innovative garden center in America for five years running and was featured in the magazine Today's Garden Center in 2012.

Know What You Are Putting in Your Body and Your Child's Body

By Shelley Keneipp

Many Druids that I know put a lot of effort into keeping the Earth and their bodies free from toxic chemicals and harm. One thing that may be overlooked is the toxins that are in vaccines. I have firsthand observations of what damage a vaccine can do: My cousin's two children were both diagnosed with various degrees of autism after receiving the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella vaccine. The symptoms, including a sudden lack of interaction for one child while the other screamed while awake for two years, began within 24 hours and the other within 48 hours of receiving the vaccines. I have two grandchildren who suffered adverse effects within 24 hours of receiving the Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis vaccine, including high fevers and painful injection sites, although they did eventually recover.

There have been many adverse reactions reported as a result of receiving almost every vaccination, according to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS), which is co-managed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to promote vaccine safety (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration, n.d.).

In the following article, I will detail some of the ingredients in vaccinations so that you are more fully informed. The listed ingredients are taken from the inserts of the drug manufacturers and is updated by the CDC (2015).

Aluminum—(in 12 vaccines): According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, "Aluminum can cause neurologic harm" (1996, pp. 413–416). Stephanie Seneff, PhD, senior research scientist at MIT, agrees with this in a movie about vaccines called "Bought," (Hays & Sheehan, 2014).

Beta-propiolactone—(In flu and rabies vaccines): According to a research paper done by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (International Agency for Research on Cancer, 1999), Beta-propiolactone is carcinogenic to animals and has been classified as a Group 2B possible human carcinogen.

Gelatin—(in nine vaccines): Produced from selected pieces of calf and cattle skins, demineralized cattle bones, and pork skin. "Severe allergic reactions to MMR vaccine were associated with the presence of antibodies in the blood directed against gelatin," according to Sakaguchi, Nakayama, and Inouye (1996, pp. 1058–1061). Note: This is a rare occurrence.

Gentamicin sulfate, polymyxin b, and neomycin (antibiotics)—(in 13 vaccines): The overuse of antibiotics has resulted in the development of resistant bacteria. As with any antibiotic, allergic reactions can range from mild to life threatening.*

Glutaraldehyde—(in three vaccines): Glutaraldehyde is also used as a hydrofracking fluid. "Glutaraldehyde (GA) is widely used in the industrial, scientific and biomedical fields. Many adverse health effects on humans have been reported in association with biomedical uses of GA," according to Takigawa and Endo (2006, p. 75).

Formaldehyde (formalin)—(in 12 vaccines): Formaldehyde is a major component of embalming fluid, poisonous if ingested. Reviewed studies have indicated that formaldehyde has neurotoxic characteristics and systemic toxic effects on the nervous system (Songur, Ozen, & Sarsilmaz, 2010).

Insect, animal, and human cells—(in 19 vaccines): Some vaccines are prepared using human cells from aborted fetal tissue and human albumin (CDC, 2015). Other vaccines are prepared using chick embryos, monkey kidneys, dog kidneys, calf serum, beef hearts, chicken protein, beef muscle tissue, beef casein, embryonic guinea pig cell cultures, and insect cells. The problem is that "because they (the animal cells) are injected directly into the bloodstream, they are able to change our genetic structure" (Blanck, Li, Pomert, Pollack, & Chen, pp. 1520–1523).

Mercury (aka thimerosal ormethylmercury)—(still in four vaccines): Mercury is a known neurotoxin. In July 1999, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a statement urging the removal of the mercury-containing preservative thimerosal from vaccines (CDC, 1999). Thimerosal has been linked to impaired brain development (Myers, Davidson, & Shamlaye, 1998). Yet, flu shots are being given starting at six months of age.

Monosodium glutamate—(in six vaccines): Allergic reactions can range from mild to severe.*

Polysorbate 80 (aka Tween 80)—(in eight vaccines): Causes infertility in mammals (Gajdová, Jakubovsky, & Války, 1993).

Do you know?

Some people say that the vaccines only contain trace amounts of these ingredients. However, over $3.2 billion has been awarded by the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (NVICP), which is known as vaccine court (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). The NVICP is the no-fault alternative to the traditional tort system for resolving vaccine injury claims, and it provides compensation to people found to be injured by certain vaccines. Compensation comes from a tax on administered vaccines. Thus, money for this program is funded by U.S. taxpayers, not the drug companies. If vaccines are so safe, as the drug companies would like us to believe, why do they not stand behind their products? They take no responsibility for any damages their products produce.

According to Gayle Delong, PhD, associate professor of international finance at Baruch College, "We need to have a vaccinated versus unvaccinated study, if we want real proof. And that study has never been done, by the way" (Hays & Sheehan, 2014).

I strongly suggest that you see the award-winning film *Bought* (Hays & Sheehan, 2014), in which medical doctors and top researchers provided information about the harmful effects that vaccines can cause.

*When babies are hours or days old, it is impossible to know if they have an allergy.

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Shelley Keneipp is the author of "The Parent's Guide to Homeopathy," North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA, 2015.

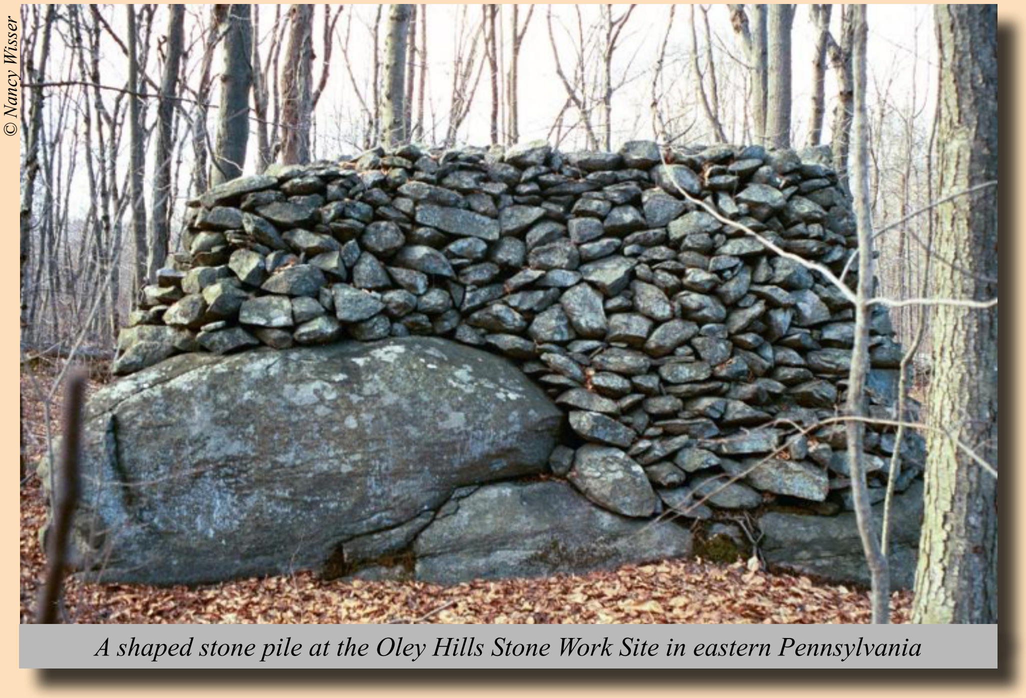
COMING UP FROM THE LAND: RECEIVING THE SPEECH OF THE SPIRITS

BY NANCY A. WISSER

"You know, I think if people stay somewhere long enough…the spirits will begin to speak to them. It's the power of the spirits coming up from the land. The spirits and the old powers aren't lost, they just need people to be around long enough and the spirits will begin to influence them." ~ Crow Elder, as quoted by poet and writer Gary Snyder (Snyder, 1990, p. 42)

Eleven years ago or so, I was seated by a ceremonial fire in the back yard of a small property in Norristown, Pennsylvania, invited by friends who were members of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania. During a break in the proceedings, the young woman seated next to me asked how I came to be there, and I told her the following story…

Some months before, the editor of a local magazine had called to ask me to write an article on the Lenape people, the indigenous people of the Lehigh Valley. At first, I did not want to write the story because I was a nature writer and never had much interest in history. As far as I knew at the time, the Lenape people no longer existed, or maybe a few were out West somewhere. But I figured this would be an easy write—read a few books, maybe visit a historical society or two, so I agreed.


© Nancy Wisser

A shaped stone pile at the Oley Hills Stone Work Site in eastern Pennsylvania

Trying to spice up what otherwise looked to be yet another grim recounting of injustices like gifts of diseased blankets and the notorious Walking Purchase ("Walking Purchase," n.d.), I went online and poked around, leaving questions on a few pages; then I went to the library to begin reading through histories and old texts. A few days later, to my surprise, I got a call requesting I meet with two men, Fred Werkheiser and Don Repsher, who had heard about my questions on the Internet and seemed to think they could help with my research.

Curious, I agreed, and in the course of the evening was let in on not one but two secrets: First, that our area, which I thought I knew so well, had numerous pre-Columbian stone work sites; and second, that some Lenape people had remained in their sacred homeland, hidden and passing for non-Indians while retaining some of their traditions. They had decided to make their presence public, and I might be among the first to know and write about it!

The next few months were a strange and wonderful era in my life. I spent enormous amounts of time visiting stone sites and talking with Fred, Don, some of their friends, and other Lenape descendants. It took me a while to believe these people were Lenape because they did not look like Native Americans, but I had learned that European explorers had even commented on how European they looked when meeting them in the 16th and 17th centuries. By the time I met them, there had also been a great deal of intermarriage, especially with German families. German men who came here to farm found Lenape women to be excellent mates, not least because in Lenape society, farming was women's work, and they knew the secrets to cultivating the land here.

© Nancy Wisser

Face on an old red oak tree

In the end, it was the way they thought and spoke that showed me they had a background and worldview different from anyone I knew. I was fascinated and rapidly became absorbed in the things I was learning, enchanted by the brilliant and good-humored people. My involvement went past researching the article—I began taking notes for a book.

Still, the article had to be written. After the usual struggle to get it right, I ran it past Fred and the chief, Bob Red Hawk, and, with their approval, submitted it to the editor. She called and asked me questions, so fascinated that she wanted to meet the Lenape and see the stone sites. While she said the article was well written, she rejected it! She had asked for a history and, somewhere in the excitement, I lost sight of the assignment. I was stunned.

"So," I told the lovely young Lenape woman, "that's how I ended up here today." The editor had trusted me to write the article, and the Lenape Nation had trusted me to get the word out. Despite months of intensive learning and involvement, I did not get the article published. I experienced the anguish anew, just saying it.

The young woman looked at me and laughed as if I'd told her a long joke. "That's great!" she said.

It was not the reaction I expected, but I was familiar enough with this way of thinking to get the implication. She was admiring the wonderful round-about way that Spirit had used to involve me with the Lenape and the stone work for some purpose or purposes yet to be revealed: admiring the brilliant maneuver by life, that crazy trickster. I wasn't ready to see it that way, but for a moment I wondered what that purpose could possibly be.

After that, for reasons mostly my fault, I lost touch with the people of the Lenape Nation and the others whose company I'd enjoyed. My way of seeing things was changed past the point of no return, however, and one idea in particular formed from parts of that experience, often turned over in my mind.

Once early on during my time with the Lenape, I talked with an outgoing young man about environmental issues on our return from sacred sites. I had been involved in producing a nature newsletter prior to the assignment. He said they believed that people who work for the Earth, no matter what their lineage, had been recruited by the Earth—that the spirits had spoken to them.

The Lenape I met were intelligent, down-to-earth people. They didn't make a great show of talking about spirits or talk about them often, but when they did mention them, they spoke about spirits as if they were talking about cars or trees or people they knew. It was very matter-of-fact, the way you talk about something real, not something dreamy or mystical. I didn't understand how such sensible people could talk that way about something flaky like spirits, and now here was this recruitment-by-the-earth business. How would that work? It seemed crazy, completely out of character. I put it aside, but I didn't forget it.

© Nancy Wisser

Ostrich ferns

Another piece of the puzzle came through Fred's interest in the stonework, which was how he met the Lenape. Mark, a friend of his took him to visit stone sites in New England, at first thinking, as most interested people did then, that they were built by Europeans visiting long before Columbus. At some point, though, Fred and Mark read a book making the case that not only had indigenous people built the sites, but also some were still using them for ceremony.

Fred ran the risk of being considered a crackpot by some, but Mark, an amateur archaeologist, was subject to open contempt, rejection, and derision from colleagues for his insistence that the stone sites were of pre-Columbian indigenous origins; he said his colleagues believed they were colonial constructions. It didn't keep him from talking about it, but the criticism and disrespect may have taken its toll. He died young, before the Lenape and I met Fred, and without ever seeing his views vindicated. Mark's strength and courage in the face of mockery inspired Fred to pursue the topic. Fred had talked often about Mark as a brave man of vision.

Intrigued by Fred's stories, I asked to read Mark's unpublished novel, which he had written towards the end of his life, because it included his thoughts about the stone sites. In the novel, entitled *In a Lee*, there is a passage in which Alan, the main character (modeled on Mark himself), flashes back to a wonderful childhood moment alone in nature: a moment that although wordless, felt like some kind of speech to him. The woman that the character was with had also experienced a similar moment.

"And what did it say to you?" [Alan asked.]

"It was like a happy thing, a celebration—that we live forever within a connection. With the ones we love. Forever. Always forever."

In the book, Alan calls the impact of these moments "language in memory," and he says that the stone sites were built as a written version, an expression, of that blissful experience. It sounded far out and mystical to me when I read this, but the thing was, I knew the moments he meant. I had had one, too. When I was a girl, maybe six years old, I had a moment of bliss that in memory somehow resembled speech, conveyed that I was connected to everything, and that we would all live forever. The wheels in my head started turning: recruitment by the Earth, the casual talk of spirits, and now this. I felt like I was following bread crumbs, but I didn't know where they were leading.

At that point I was still working on the article, so the next time I interviewed the chief, I asked whether he would say that the spirits had spoken to someone like Mark, who loved nature and had so much courage and vision. Chief Bob said, "Yes." When I got off the phone, I was elated. The idea was alien to my way of seeing the world, so it came together slowly. What if the childhood moments that both Mark and I had were the recruitment by the Earth that the young Lenape man had mentioned? What if that sense of having been spoken to, that "language in memory" as Mark described in his novel, was what they meant by the spirits speaking? That would mean—something in me didn't want to go to where this sentence ends at that time. But now, I can say... *that would mean that their spirits were something real in my life, too.*

Not only was my childhood timeless moment something real, but also, as I thought about it, I realized that it had played a huge part in making me who I was. It had remained alive in me and, like an inner guidance system, affected my likes and dislikes, my aspirations and, at times, my despair. I had never thought about it before, but that childhood reverie, that experience of unity and eternity, was one of the most influential incidents in my life.

I dropped the idea at the time, but after parting ways with the group, I got curious. If Mark and I had these moments, how many other people had? Were the interests Mark and I had in common, like poetry, spirituality, nature, the land, and a fascination with non-Western cultures, common to other people who had them? My first break came when I happened on a quotation from the writings of Catholic priest and environmentalist Father Thomas Berry, describing just such a moment from his childhood and mentioning its lifelong effects:

> Perhaps it was not simply this moment that made such a deep impression upon me. Perhaps it was a sensitivity that was developed throughout my childhood. Yet as the years pass this moment returns to me, and whenever I think about my basic life attitude and the whole

© Nancy Wisser

Path into Black Rock woods, Nazareth, PA

> trend of my mind and the causes to which I have given my efforts, I seem to come back to this moment and the impact it has had on my feeling for what is real and worthwhile in life. (Berry, 1999, pp. 12–13)

I was moved to find something that was such a good match to the ideas I was exploring, in a more familiar context. Searching for similar accounts from the early years of famous people, especially those who seemed to fit the mold, such as poets, environmentalists, artists, scientists, and nature writers, I quickly found many, including writer Virginia Woolf, chemist Albert Hoffman, biologist Berndt Heinrich, poet AE Russell, musician John Lennon, and many others. (See a video of Oprah Winfrey reliving such a life-changing spiritual experience with Steven Tyler [OWN, 2012].)

I was also intrigued to realize that I could often see the signs of these experiences in people when I met them, although I found that the question to ask was whether they had spent much time alone in nature when they were children. Many did not at first recall the moment or recognize my description as matching it. In one instance, I was sure a friend had experienced such a moment, but he said he hadn't. When I saw him months later he was eager to tell me that he had since recalled it. After our conversation, a memory had surfaced, and then more—he'd had several. He was more surprised than I was.

This ability to spot people who had the experience reminded me of an incident from my time with the Lenape. I knew some of them had gone on a vision quest, and I asked one man whose attitudes and manner seemed very different from the others if he had done so. He had not. Could these childhood experiences be like vision quests in some ways—vision quests happening by accident to people who were not seeking them? In Harrington (1913), an early observation of Lenape traditions, relatives of a young person about to go on a vision quest would sometimes feign neglect and abuse of the child because they believed the spirits took pity on abused or neglected children and came to them more quickly (pp. 214–215).

I knew that Mark suffered serious abuse as a boy—one family member even tried to drown him. I was not abused, but my parents' disintegrating marriage, an older brother who liked to hit me, and my parents' perception that I was mentally challenged and unable to understand them meant that I spent a lot of time alone, much of it outside. Maybe the experiences we had were like the raw material from which the technology of the vision quest was developed.

This thinking was far from ways we had been taught to see the world. It seemed to me that it was important for people to know about it. If I had been taught what that moment was when I was a child, and what effects it might have, would I have struggled less with feelings of isolation and with clinical depression when I got older? Would I have felt less odd and ashamed when my strong urge to be with nature interfered with things other people wanted for me? Right now, are there other girls and young women, and boys and young men, who could have happier lives if they knew what I now know?

Questions like this and others related to the topic drive me to learn more and reach out to express the ideas I stumbled upon. I wonder, do animals and plants have these experiences, too? Does it connect the living things in an area and make possible those stories we often hear about unusual bird behaviors people see, for example, after the death of a loved one? And was Mark right—are some ceremonial stone sites in our area and beyond built to express or mark the places of these or similar spirit experiences?

© Nancy Wisser

September dawn over asters and below Spitzenberg Hill in Berks County, PA

The moments also have something to do with place. In every instance, when people recounted their experiences, they remembered, even five decades later as in my case, the exact spots where childhood moments of bliss and ecstasy descended on them. Many seem to have their perception of all places modified, almost to a kind of personification. I can turn the idea of these moments over and keep finding new learning and purpose for the rest of my life. As I research and write about the topic, my problems with clinical depression have almost completely dissipated.

In June, during a trip to the United Kingdom, a friend gifted me with attendance to the OBOD summer gathering in Glastonbury. I confess I went thinking it would be something to laugh about back home, but I soon felt I was among kindred spirits, people who had had similar experiences, and who understood about the living and speaking Earth. Soon after I returned to Pennsylvania, I sent off for the OBOD starter packet. New directions for my life are still arising from that solitary moment over 50 years ago.

I don't know whether that local magazine ever ran a historical article about the Lenape. I do know that the Lenape Nation contributed to and was featured in an exhibit at the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology ("Fulfilling a Prophecy," n.d.) and they now have a cultural center of their own ("The Lenape Center," n.d.), so they managed to get the word out without me. It certainly seems that the young woman by the fire that night in Norristown was wise beyond her years. The crazy set of circumstances that opened my mind, broke my heart, and turned my life in new directions—truly was great after all!

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A version of this article was previously published online by the Powers of Place Initiative.

Nancy Alice Wisser lives in eastern Pennsylvania, where she gardens and enjoys photographing early morning landscapes. She blogs on Tumblr under the name Geopsych, and is the perpetrator of the Clonehenge blog (motto: A blog about Stonehenge replicas. We kid you not.), both labors of love, not money.

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THE STORYTELLER AS CELEBRANT

BY GAIL NYOKA

Vancouver resident Abegael Fisher-Lang has been a storyteller for 30 years. “It was an immediate love when I first heard stories,” she said in an interview/conversation we had recently. “It was just mesmerizing.”

Her other love is being a celebrant: helping to design ceremonies for important passages in people’s lives, whether it be the adoption of a child, a house leaving, opening a business, coming of age, wedding, baby naming, or funeral.

Abegael Fisher-Lang in action

© Rain City Chronicles

“I was always attracted to ceremony. It’s always been a thread in my life,” she said. Not coincidentally, Fisher-Lang calls her celebrant company Life Threads, and said, “It’s a humbling and joyful path, to meet people in their threshold places. It becomes creative storymaking. We put our voice and our imagination out there, and people are moved by it.”

Fisher-Lang expressed her delight over the times when someone who has heard her telling a story comes up to her on the street weeks or months later and says, “Remember when you told that story? It was just the story I needed to hear at that time.”

Stories connect with people on a deep level, and it’s the personal connection that Fisher-Lang enjoys in her roles both as storyteller and as celebrant. She feels that the storyteller is uniquely qualified to act as a celebrant. “As storytellers, we’ve honed skills that really come together in ceremony: deep listening, and shaping the narrative—the center of every ceremony is the story.” Storytellers, she says, “have that ease of narration, use of the voice and gesture, and holding the space. The basis of facilitation is listening, joy of language, and sharing it.”

As a celebrant, Fisher-Lang studied at the Celebrant Foundation and Institute. That was almost 10 years ago, and now she teaches the foundational course at the Institute. She believes that “everyone needs to understand how we celebrate our lives.”

To find out more about Fisher-Lang’s celebrancy, see her web site: http://life-threads.ca/

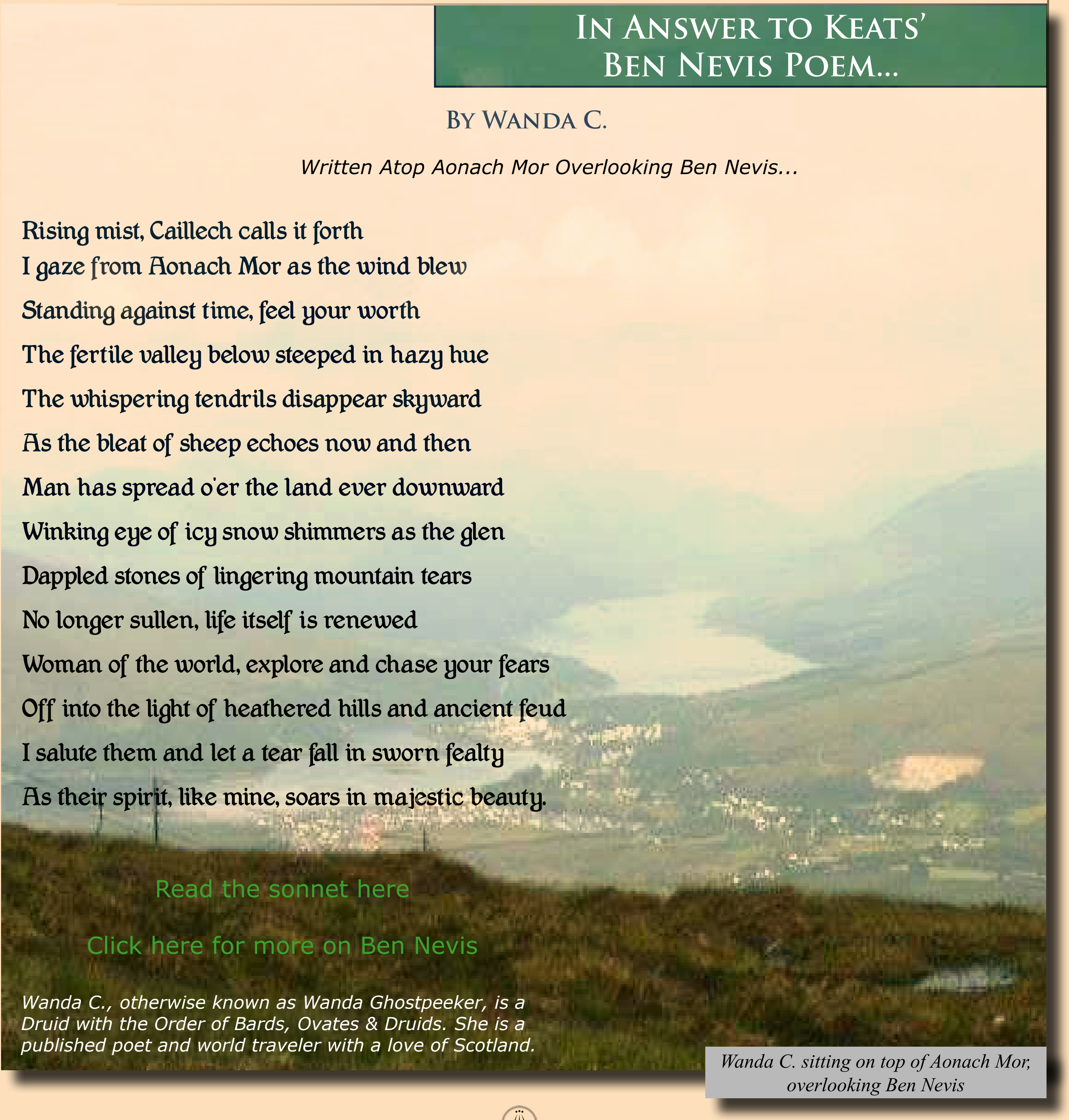
A version of this article was previously published on Gail Nyoka’s blog.

Storyteller, author, and award-winning playwright Gail Nyoka has been experiencing Awen with the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids since 2001, and is a celebrant and officiant in Ontario and Ohio.

IN ANSWER TO KEATS’ BEN NEVIS POEM...

BY WANDA C.

Written Atop Aonach Mor Overlooking Ben Nevis...



Rising mist, Caillech calls it forth
I gaze from Aonach Mor as the wind blew
Standing against time, feel your worth
The fertile valley below steeped in hazy hue
The whispering tendrils disappear skyward
As the bleat of sheep echoes now and then
Man has spread o'er the land ever downward
Winking eye of icy snow shimmers as the glen
Dappled stones of lingering mountain tears
No longer sullen, life itself is renewed
Woman of the world, explore and chase your fears
Off into the light of heathered hills and ancient feud
I salute them and let a tear fall in sworn fealty
As their spirit, like mine, soars in majestic beauty.

Read the sonnet here

Click here for more on Ben Nevis

Wanda C., otherwise known as Wanda Ghostpeeker, is a Druid with the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids. She is a published poet and world traveler with a love of Scotland.

Wanda C. sitting on top of Aonach Mor, overlooking Ben Nevis

© Wanda C.

FIND ME A PLACE

BY ERIN ROSE CONNOR

This song came out of a deep longing for place. My ancestors do not lie in the ground where I live. Like many Americans, my connection to my home is one generation deep. But on a recent trip to the lands my ancestors once lived in, I realized that it doesn't matter. We all share one planet, and we are all kin. Our connection to the land and to each other is our strength and our responsibility.

© Erin Rose Connor

Bolinas from Mount Tamalpais

This is the place that I'm living right now,
This is the home that I have.
Dig down my roots in this welcoming earth
And find me a place in this land.

Why did they come here, those people of ours,
All of the strands that became you and me?
The stories they left us are faded and torn,
But here we are, standing our ground.

Why does it matter so much to us all,
Where you were born and your claim to the Land?
All of us live here on one planet Earth.
All of us, standing our ground.

Can you be kin to a rock or a tree?
What is the circle of your family?
Who are our neighbors and who are our kin?
Who are we, standing our ground?

All we are looking for, all that we ask,
A place at the table, a place to call home.
Eyes meeting eyes and hand meeting hand,
Together, standing our ground.

Erin Rose Conner is a busker, and she can be found plying her trade in various transit stations in the Bay Area. Recently returned from an experiential Druid camp in Wales entirely funded by her busking, she is a member of Quercus, an Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids seed group in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Click here to listen to the song

A LESSON TAUGHT TO AN EARTH PILGRIM

BY M. F. HARDING

"It was dangerous what you did," the Elder said simply. Every word was precisely spoken. As with many of Thomas John's pronouncements, the full meaning in these few words was entirely lost on me.

"I know that now. I was lucky," I agreed with a cheeky smile.

The Elder simply stared at me in that expressionless way of his. My smile faded. He stared as though this alone would somehow impart the wisdom I lacked. He stared into my soul for a very long time before shaking his head slowly.

"No." It was a slap! It was a word that said nothing. It was a word that said everything.

With a heavily veined hand, he reached for his chipped cup of steaming hot tea.

"No?" I echoed.

"Not lucky," he paused again, peering at me with the tranquil unblinking expression of an owl.

"Chosen." He took a sip of tea and nodded. Thomas John of the Cape Mudge First Nations band was a man of few words. He once said he was too old to waste even a single word.

"You were chosen," he said finally. The chair creaked as I sat back. For now our conversation was over.

I thought back to that night.

Nighttime in a rain forest this old has to be experienced. I could feel this living, breathing, dripping environment seething all around me, but I was suddenly plunged into TOTAL darkness.

I could feel the night demons whispering into my mind. Sounds, amplified, were surreal and utterly alien. I now know the horrors of sudden blindness. I descended by degrees into a realm of terror I had never imagined. My sense of dread grew with every degree that the temperature fell. It conspired to turn simple discomfort to hollow misery. Every familiar sound that occured during the day ended, replaced by unidentifiable sounds seemingly conspiring to generate panic in me. Night in a forest such as this can foster huddling, shivering terror.

Nocturnal scurriers poked through the leaves and humus in search of food. Was I the food? Things fell from trees in random cracks and crashes. Was I the target? Unidentifiable scrapes, scrabbles, grunts, groans, chirps, chitters, thumps, and thuds took over in a somewhat disturbing abundance. Was I the hunted? In darkness, my mind wanted to paint a visual picture to match what my ears heard. The mind is a notorious liar, and the pictures it painted for me came straight out of a nightmare.

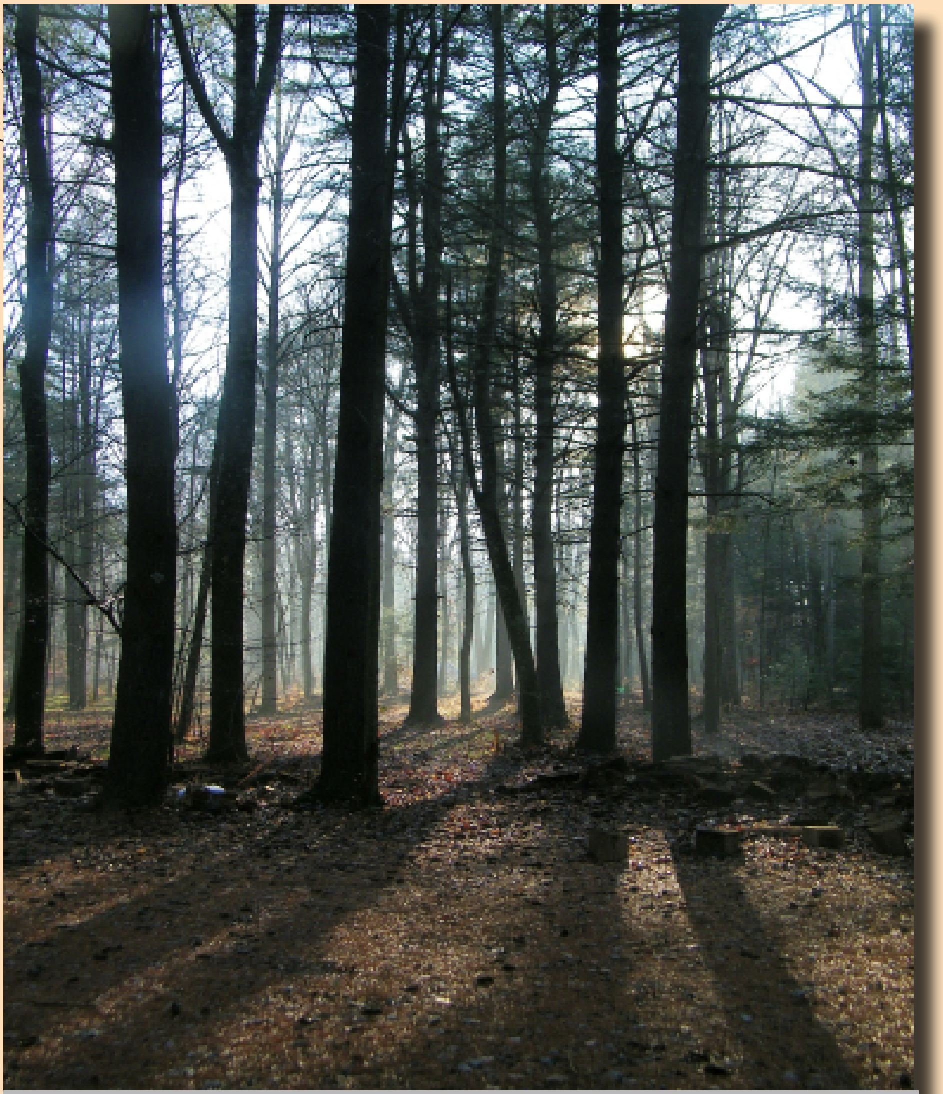
The forest came alive. The creatures of the darkness talked to it. They called, laughed, screamed, chased, and fled. That is when I heard it for the first time—

it was an unmistakable whistle, but it was a hollow, unearthly sound. It was both a whistle and a hoot, but it was long drawn out and plaintive. It sounded like it had been generated far in the distance and traveled down an impossibly long tube ending quite near at hand. Was it a voice or was that just an illusion? It started with one voice, and I thought I was just imagining it over the tumbling sounds of the Ralph River. I believed it, at first, to be a dream sound, similar to the kind of sound we all experience while hovering at the very edge of sleep. However, the first whistle was answered by another. A much closer voice! A different voice! I sat up to listen and leaned deeper into the split bole of the giant Red Cedar I had chosen as shelter. Something outside my experience was happening and it was happening very close at hand. I felt the first drops of rain.

At first, I thought it was a bird, but, with only a few exceptions, birds do not fly or call at night. Moreover, this was unlike any bird song I had ever heard. Bird songs of the day in my experience are cheery sounds filled with light and happiness. This sound held a profound sense of melancholy in it. The whistles continued and increased in volume and frequency—one every few seconds. They were coming from everywhere: some came from the front, back, and to either side. Some were very close, others were further away. Oh, how I wished for sight. Wishing does not help the blind and it did not help me.

Boom!

I nearly jumped out of my skin. The whistles were now being accompanied


© Sophia Kelly Shultz

The White Pines, Four Quarters Interfaith Sanctuary members' camp, Artemas, PA by dull heavy thuds as if something huge was striking the ground with a flat mallet. I could feel the shockwave through the ground. I had the feeling I was being surrounded. I *was* being surrounded. I could not escape. I would not survive.

I had been told long ago the rainforests of Vancouver Island were one of the most beautiful places on Earth. They are. I had been told one could spend a lifetime learning it secrets, and that trees stand watch over the creatures that call it home. However, there was a dark side to this world. I was told it could take you—without malice, without mercy, and without a second thought. It could take you from this life so that no one would ever see you again. It would simply reach out and fold you into its bosom. Was I now going to be taken?

Boom!

Yes. It would seem so. I hoped it would come quickly now. I was cold and at the height of my misery. It did not come quickly. The forest was taking its time. It had waited thousands of years for this moment. It could wait a few hours more. Could I wait as easily? Perhaps. But perhaps not was far more likely. Was this a test? Had the forest sent this night and its creatures to measure my quality?

The forest took me that night, but I did not die.

BOOM!

The ground shook. It was very close this time, and it was followed by another whistle. This time, I thought I could feel and smell the breath of the creature as it whistled at me. Had one just given me a sniff? It felt that way. It was raining hard now, but these whistling and stamping sounds continued unabated for a long time around me before slowly fading, mercifully ebbing back into silence.

Had all this been just my imagination? Had the whistling been replaced by the soft sounds of breathing? It seemed so, but that sound was far too faint for me to tell for sure. I settled inside the ancient Red Cedar and let its distinctive smell lull me. Did I pass the test? I chose life and left the forest's mysterious night sounds to themselves while I tried to sleep alone in the cold, wet, and dark.

Sleep can be a funny thing. Just before dawn, I was awakened to a low plaintive melancholy whistle. It was a sound that I felt I had heard somewhere before. At first, I couldn't place exactly where. I drifted between the land of dreams and reality. Another whistle echoed the first and, all at once, I was awake. The whistles had begun again and so had the heavy thumps. I heard the unmistakable sound of a great beast shaking water from its hide and felt some of it blow into my face.

I was still swaddled in total darkness. It had stopped raining. I waited in silence. Even blind I seemed to feel a presence very close at hand. Something blew into my face. It was a sweet smell, and although I tensed up, I also smiled. No one saw. The noises faded quickly as the world brightened, and by the time I could see shapes again, they had stopped entirely. I was totally alone. It must

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Artemas, PA

have all been a dream.

Thomas John was gazing deep into his cup of tea. It was no longer steaming. How long I sat in my reverie I could not tell, and the Elder would not say. His chair creaked as he stood to boil more water for his tea. He was old when I had first met him. He showed his age now. He told me that first day that I should learn to listen. We all hear, but few of us listen and fewer still learn.

"Chosen?" That word returned to me. "By who?"

"By what? You should already know the answer to that question. You listen but still you learn nothing." He put more loose tea in his cup and waited for the water to heat. Mine was untouched and quite cold. Something suddenly occurred to me.

"Elk! They were Elk!"

His head lifted from the stove, and he turned around. Store-bought teeth glistened in one of his all too infrequent smiles. He nodded. "Females and their young. They might have killed you."

"Kwa-Kwa-Walk." I tried to pronounce this word from his native language. I didn't do a good job. I am an outsider—blonde hair, blue eyes, round in the middle from too much fast food. White!

"Is that your word for Elk?" I asked.

"No. That is your name now. You were chosen by the Grandfathers of the forest. Very few are ever chosen," the Elder said.

"Kwa-Kwa-Walk" I tried again. "What does it mean?"

"Earth Pilgrim. You will be known as Earth Pilgrim until the end of your days. You will be remembered as Earth Pilgrim long after that."

I nodded my thanks.

He poured water into his cracked cup and sat down again.

"It was dangerous what you did," he said taking a sip. "They are pretty big."

"No." It was not a slap. It was simply a word that said nothing. It was a word that said everything.

M. F. Harding is a practicing Druid, and, for the past five years, his pilgrimage has brought him to Campbell River, B.C. For the last 27 years, he has made a detailed study of the coastal rainforests of Western Canada and Vancouver Island. He lives there with his wife Barbara and Border Collie Daisy-Mae.

Writing Contest Winner

Fall 2015 Winner

Forest Dweller

by Milo Bennett Burdine

Runnerup:

Circular Room by Cathryn Bauer

You awaken in a circular room with four doors: the first is made of wood, the second of stone, the third of ice, and the fourth of flame. Choose a door to pass through, and tell us the story of what happens when you do.”

Forest Dweller

by Milo Bennett Burdine

I awoke to find myself deep under the earth in a circular cavern. Looking around, I saw four arched doors a few feet away from me. The doors were separately composed of varying elemental energies. The first was melting crystalline ice, the second blazing amber flame, the third metallic rock, and the final door was bark and tangled branches. Hearing the whispers of an unknown source, I lifted my sore body from the cavern floor. I wore a shredded tunic which fell past my knees. My feet were bare, chilled by the cavern floor. Upon my left arm was a tarnished torque, given to me by father before he passed away. Knowing I would be transported to another realm by entering one of the doors, I closed my eyes. Holding out my hands, I felt dry branches twist around my fingers, gently pulling me in.

Emerging from an opened portal, I fell to my knees. As my heart slowed to a normal rhythm and the nausea I felt in my gut slowly lifted, I realized I had been taken to a forest realm. The forest was in the depths of an icy winter. The barren trees swayed in the howling winds as I took my first steps on the frosted ground. Traveling for some time, I eventually came upon a grove. An ancient standing stone was in the center. In awe of the stone, I bowed to it, offering my gratitude. I noticed the dark gray stone seemed to shimmer, as if a spirit lived within. As I stood and watched the amber sun slowly melt beneath the tree line, I heard noises nearby and ran for cover under low hanging branches. A group of men appeared, clad in brown furs. One of the men was older, appearing to be a Druidic priest. His head was bald and smeared in gray ash. He was wrapped in a green shawl and carrying a pair of antlers. My father had told me tales of such men and women involved in the mystical arts of nature veneration and his descriptions matched what I was seeing.

I felt a tap on my shoulder and shifted around, seeing a man about my age. His eyes of bright hazel stared back at me with an intensity I had never known, yet I sensed something familiar in his presence. His dark hair was tightly twisted into small braids above his left ear. He was wearing a single fur wrapped loosely around his thin waist. His chiseled torso was bare except for marks of ink that were burnt onto his light cream skin. These mysterious marks trailed down his lean abdomen beneath the furs. Leaning in close, he whispered in my ear that it was time for me to join them.

I was handed furs and I withdrew my tunic, letting it fall to the iced soil. The man wrapped the furs delicately around me, saying they would keep me warm. He brought a salve scented with lavender over to me, dabbing the substance to my chest in circular designs. He also spread lines down my arms and rubbed it generously into my bruised feet, his fingers remaining idle for just a brief moment.

Holding a bowl filled with sparkling white powder, he whispered, “As we anoint you, so you will become one of us and become one with the forest.”

The man took the powder in his fingers and smeared it over my forehead, his soulful eyes lingering on me as he did

Many thanks to our special guest judges

Nimue Brown

Nimue is a Druid author of assorted fiction and non-fiction titles, including Hopeless Maine (graphic novel series) and Pagan Dreaming (non-fiction). She lives in the United Kingdom, and blogs regularly here.

© Grizelda Holderness

© Kathleen Harrington

Kathleen Harrington

Kathleen is a Druid Grade OBOD member from Baton Rouge, LA. A retired university instructor, she divides her time between being a devoted servant to her cats and keeping her favorite coffee shop in business.

WRITING CONTEST PROMPT - WINTER 2016 ISSUE

While traveling deep in the forest during the fall season, you come across an imposing stag caught in a hunter's snare. After a moment of contemplation, you gently approach and free it from the binding. Once you do, a whirl of leaves transforms the creature in to a wise old Druid. After heartfelt thanks, she pulls a box from her flowing robes and whispers, "Inside this box is the key to your inspiration. Use it well." Describe what happens next…

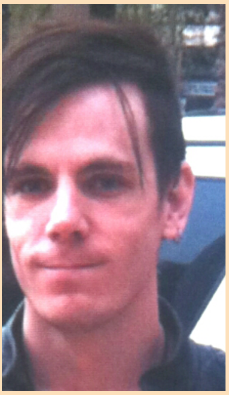
RULES

so. The other men dipped their hands into the bowl, gesturing I do the same.

I was then led to the standing stone. The man pressed my now stained white hands upon the weathered stone and began to chant softly, his velvety voice strong amidst the creaking trees. After a few minutes, my mind was flooded with visions of the spirit that resided within the stone. I saw how the stone was brought to this grove and what ceremonies had been performed in honor of it. I was overcome by these visions and fell backwards, only to be quickly caught. Holding me tight, the man whispered that the visions would pass and softly blew onto my neck, his heated breath soothing me.

The other men motioned for us to take our positions in the circle that was forming near the stone. Once in our places, the priest lifted his pair of antlers towards the dark skies and sang. As his voice rose high atop the trees, the stars shone brightly through the gray clouds, igniting the grove in a silver haze. I noticed the standing stone took on a mirrored appearance, reflecting the sparkling starlight. The other members of the circle rose their hands, singing along with the priest. I lifted my hands, trying to learn the song, until all of us were singing in unison. As we entered into a combined trance state, the spirits of the forest became visible. The spirits took the form of emerald green energy, spiraling around the trees. A lone spirit twisted itself around my ankle. Feeling safe with the spirit, I allowed it to stay attached. After some time in silence, the priest lowered the antlers and entered into silent prayer. The circle slowly disbanded, all except the young man, who was waiting for me near the edge of the grove. As I stood there, still slightly in the trance state, I knew then that I must follow him. Feeling a mysterious call to trust this person, I reached for his hand.

As we left the grove together, I felt the spirit still attached to my ankle bestow a blessing upon me for my new life in the forest realm.



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Milo B. Burdine lives in Chicago, IL, where he works in theological libraries. He gathers inspiration for his writing through dreams, the natural world, and the spirit realms.

CIRCULAR ROOM

BY CATHRYN BAUER

It's cold. I reach out for contact—husband, cats—but there are only quilts and good linen. The last I remembered, I was at the Gathering. The ritual had been lovely, solemn; the walk to my car—to my car. It was twilight. There was the clink, clank, and conversation of dinner prep as I walked past the dining hall in the direction of the parking lot. And that was the very last I could recall. Strange that I couldn't remember anything more. I'd stayed away from the mead since I was driving back to the motel.

I was going to have to open my eyes eventually; might as well be now. Double take time. I was alone, fully dressed, on a mattress in the center, covered in warm quilts I didn't recognize. At least whoever had kidnapped me had seen fit to make me comfortable.

WHERE WAS I?

The room was round, not large, a hobbit's tiny house. There was a skylight illuminating the circular space. The walls were—well, the defining feature of this room was its doors—yes, plural. Four astounding doors, all long and slender, placed in what might well have been—yes, it was the four quarters. There was a wooden door, blonde wood. Devoid of ornament, its hinges a plain, unpainted metal, it had a sparse, Shaker look. The door toward the north seemed to be made of stone. How could anyone pass? Did you have to shove the stone to get out? How could a stone be hinged? And was that really a door of ice? I could see light shining beyond it. How on earth was it remaining frozen? To the south, there was a door-shaped opening filled with shining flame. Was it meant to be a portal? However did one get through?

It was the door of flame, that impassable door that enlightened me. I was in a magical place, somewhere not on a map, somewhere I was meant to be. The portals were somehow for me. I was—if the fairy tales held true, I was to choose. Or let them choose me somehow. Or maybe there was another way, a different guidance. I would stand in front of each and see which, if any, called me. Or repelled me. Or opened on their own, without force.

At that moment, I was nearest the ice door. In some ways, it was the most curious, and seemed as good a place as any to begin. I walked up and looked

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Calvert County, MD

through it. I was astonished at its cloudiness. I could not see shapes or detail when I peered into it, only muted sunlight. I held my palm outward toward the ice door, asking it, “Are you the door I must take? If so, how will I get through?” There was only silence, a chill on my palm, and the glimpse of daylight through the ice. I closed my eyes and listened carefully. Silence. More silence. I did not think that this was the door for me.

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Calvert County, MD

I found myself chanting the Awen as I moved toward the stone door, which immediately opened without my touching it, the stone sliding forward, seemingly on its own, so that I could get through. And I was in my own garden, of all places, grove and labyrinth and all. Birds swooped over the wildflowers, wrens and finches and crows, a black hawk circling the labyrinth. Beautiful, yes, but I had journeyed to the Gathering, and been gifted with a magical journey only to find myself at home?

Or maybe it wasn’t quite the same. The hawk seemed to be gazing directly at me, and were the birds actually talking? I could almost understand, I thought, I could almost just hear…

STOP. The word reverberated through me once, and then again. STOP. I stood, rooted. I saw that the central evergreen in the grove had new growth at the top. I hadn’t seen that before I left for the Gathering. Irrelevant now. I had to know who was talking to me.

The birds were looking at me. It wasn’t my imagination. The crows rasped continuously, dissonant. But they had a word for me, too. SEE. SEE. What was I to see? I knew this place so well, working it most mornings through the warm season, planning for it all winter. Yet it had something new for me today. There was a whole different flower in the meadow, a white, many-petaled bloom resembling a lilac, dotted throughout the poppies, daisies, and bachelor’s buttons. And the evergreens of the grove, they were so beautiful there amidst the flowers and grasses. There are so many different shades of green.

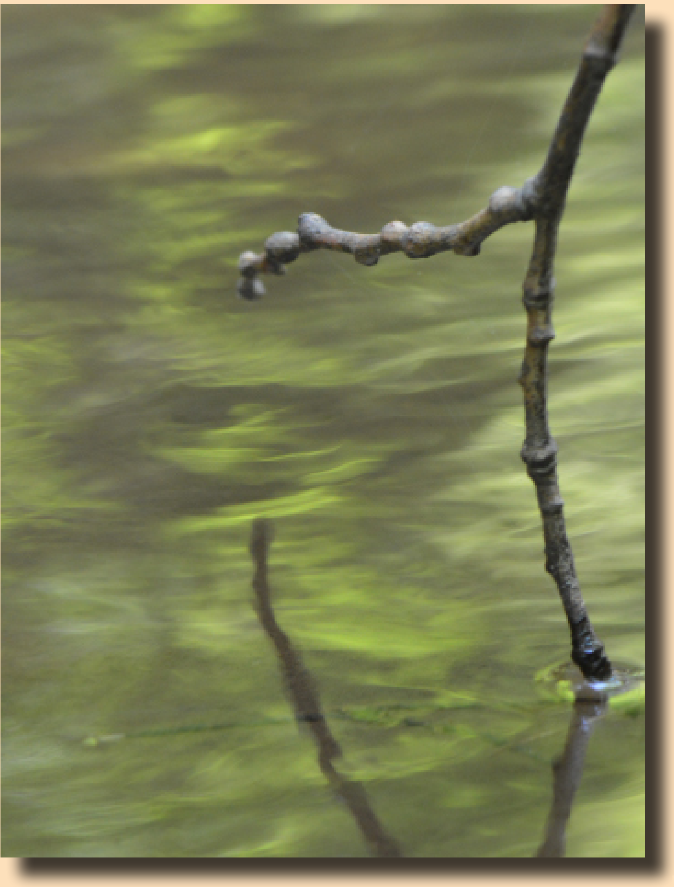
There were so many birds, near and far, that I had not heard before. Underneath the cawing and the spare hawk cry, there was an entirely new layer of bird chatter as the wind moved through the trees, playing the leaves like harp strings, and the smell of the mint I'd planted wafted in my direction. But why was I here and in Pennsylvania at the Gathering?

You're home, something inside me whispered. You're always home. The land you've bonded with and worked stays with you always. Now, see. Listen. Stop.

And it was dusk again, and I could hear crickets. I was standing in the Pennsylvania woods between the main house and the parking lot. The trees were strikingly different than the ones in my yard; I was going to see if I could meet one of several of them up close and personal between workshops tomorrow. They were older! I wondered how many of the young women who attended the summer camp there had been inspired to hug the trees. I felt my feet on the ground, balancing effortlessly on the earth. Here, now, but always there somehow, too, back in the garden, smelling the mint, listening for what the birds thought I should know.

© Cathryn Bauer

Cathryn Bauer, a Druid Grade member of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, is a crazy cat lady and fiddler living in Prince Frederick, MD.



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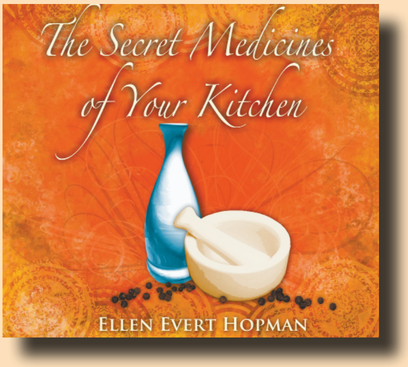
GET LISTED

SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS

THE SECRET MEDICINES OF YOUR KITCHEN

Hopman, E. E. (2012). The secret medicines of your kitchen: A practical guide. London: mPowr Ltd.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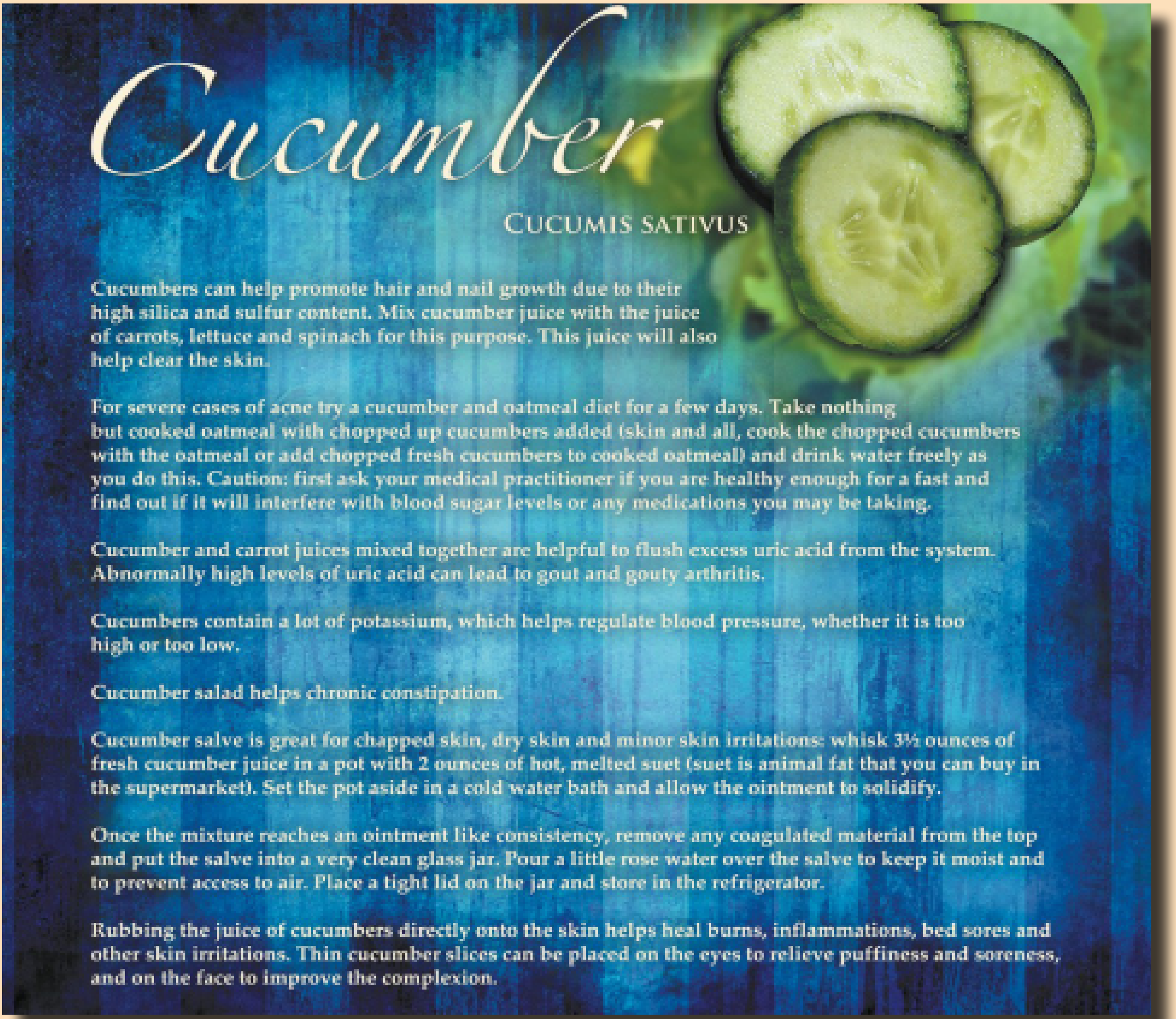
The Secret Medicines of Your Kitchen (2012) by Ellen Evert Hopman is a gorgeous little book. It is full of rich illustrations accompanying lore and usage about a number of culinary ingredients that have the natural power to heal. From artichokes to butter and fennel to watercress, the book provides recipes, nutritional information, and tips. This makes a great holiday gift for the kitchen witch! Here are two pages courtesy of publisher mPowr. *~Renu K. Aldrich*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Cucumber

CUCUMIS SATIVUS

Cucumbers can help promote hair and nail growth due to their high silica and sulfur content. Mix cucumber juice with the juice of carrots, lettuce and spinach for this purpose. This juice will also help clear the skin.

For severe cases of acne try a cucumber and oatmeal diet for a few days. Take nothing but cooked oatmeal with chopped up cucumbers added (skin and all, cook the chopped cucumbers with the oatmeal or add chopped fresh cucumbers to cooked oatmeal) and drink water freely as you do this. Caution: first ask your medical practitioner if you are healthy enough for a fast and find out if it will interfere with blood sugar levels or any medications you may be taking.

Cucumber and carrot juices mixed together are helpful to flush excess uric acid from the system. Abnormally high levels of uric acid can lead to gout and gouty arthritis.

Cucumbers contain a lot of potassium, which helps regulate blood pressure, whether it is too high or too low.

Cucumber salad helps chronic constipation.

Cucumber salve is great for chapped skin, dry skin and minor skin irritations: whisk 3½ ounces of fresh cucumber juice in a pot with 2 ounces of hot, melted suet (suet is animal fat that you can buy in the supermarket). Set the pot aside in a cold water bath and allow the ointment to solidify.

Once the mixture reaches an ointment like consistency, remove any coagulated material from the top and put the salve into a very clean glass jar. Pour a little rose water over the salve to keep it moist and to prevent access to air. Place a tight lid on the jar and store in the refrigerator.

Rubbing the juice of cucumbers directly onto the skin helps heal burns, inflammations, bed sores and other skin irritations. Thin cucumber slices can be placed on the eyes to relieve puffiness and soreness, and on the face to improve the complexion.

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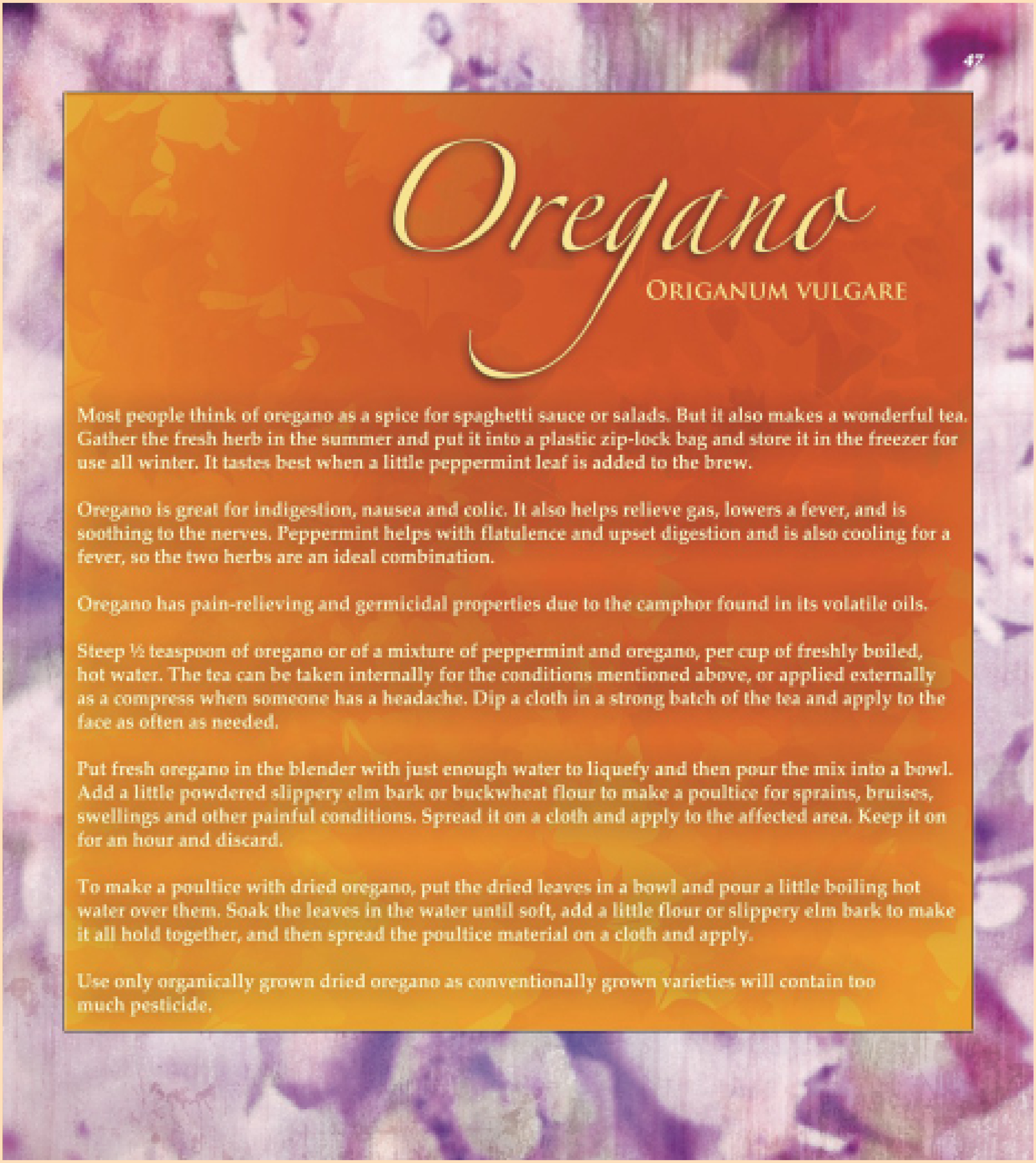


Oregano

ORIGANUM VULGARE

Most people think of oregano as a spice for spaghetti sauce or salads. But it also makes a wonderful tea. Gather the fresh herb in the summer and put it into a plastic zip-lock bag and store it in the freezer for use all winter. It tastes best when a little peppermint leaf is added to the brew.

Oregano is great for indigestion, nausea and colic. It also helps relieve gas, lowers a fever, and is soothing to the nerves. Peppermint helps with flatulence and upset digestion and is also cooling for a fever, so the two herbs are an ideal combination.

Oregano has pain-relieving and germicidal properties due to the camphor found in its volatile oils.

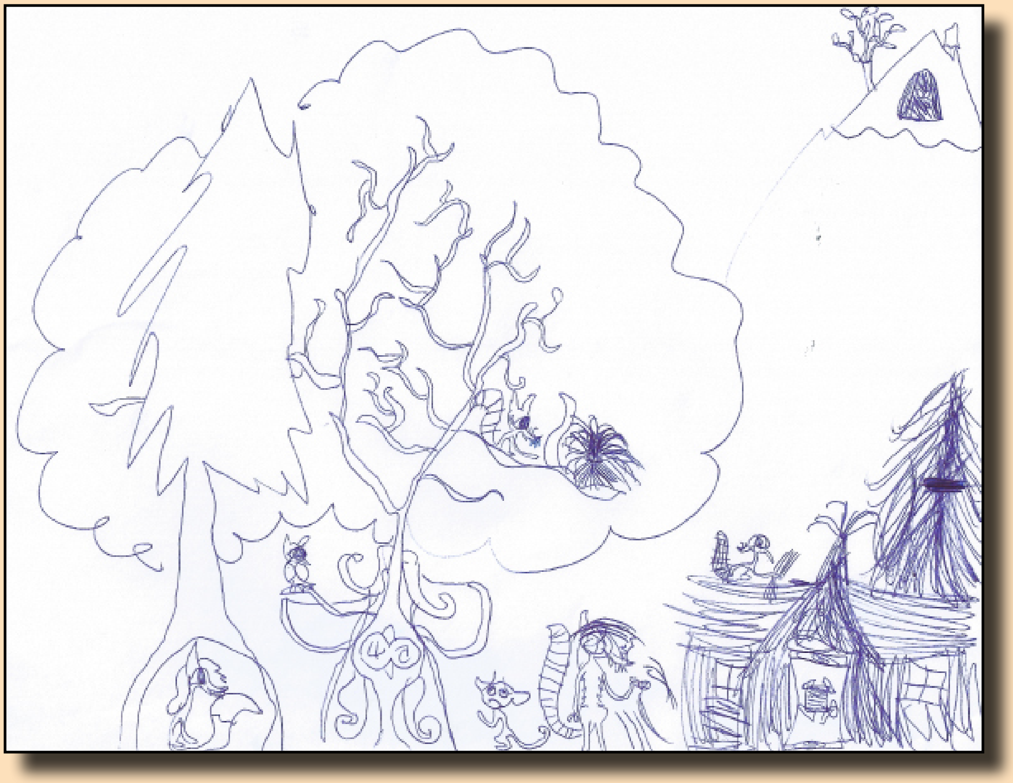
Steep ½ teaspoon of oregano or of a mixture of peppermint and oregano, per cup of freshly boiled, hot water. The tea can be taken internally for the conditions mentioned above, or applied externally as a compress when someone has a headache. Dip a cloth in a strong batch of the tea and apply to the face as often as needed.

Put fresh oregano in the blender with just enough water to liquefy and then pour the mix into a bowl. Add a little powdered slippery elm bark or buckwheat flour to make a poultice for sprains, bruises, swellings and other painful conditions. Spread it on a cloth and apply to the affected area. Keep it on for an hour and discard.

To make a poultice with dried oregano, put the dried leaves in a bowl and pour a little boiling hot water over them. Soak the leaves in the water until soft, add a little flour or slippery elm bark to make it all hold together, and then spread the poultice material on a cloth and apply.

Use only organically grown dried oregano as conventionally grown varieties will contain too much pesticide.

DRAWINGS BY ELIANA, AGE 8



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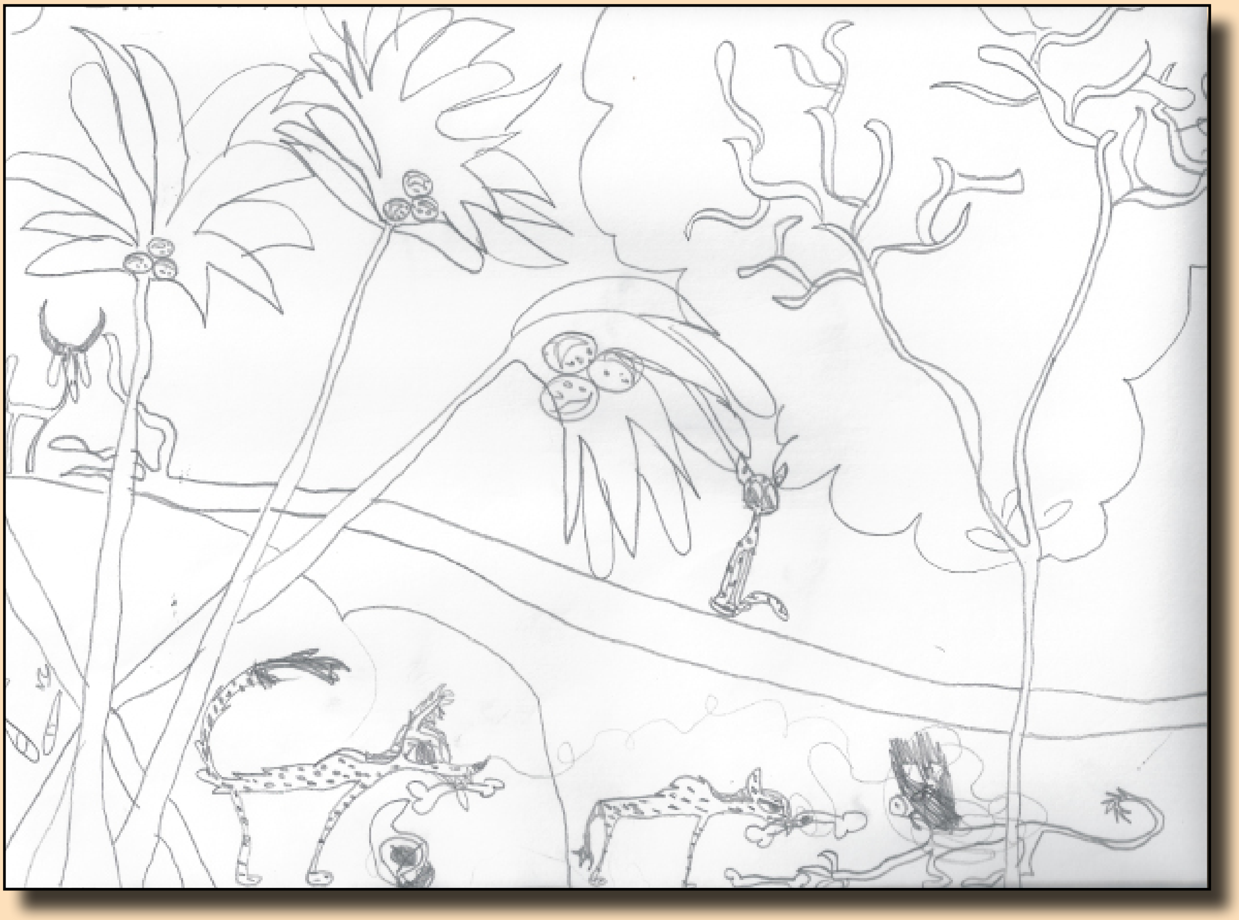

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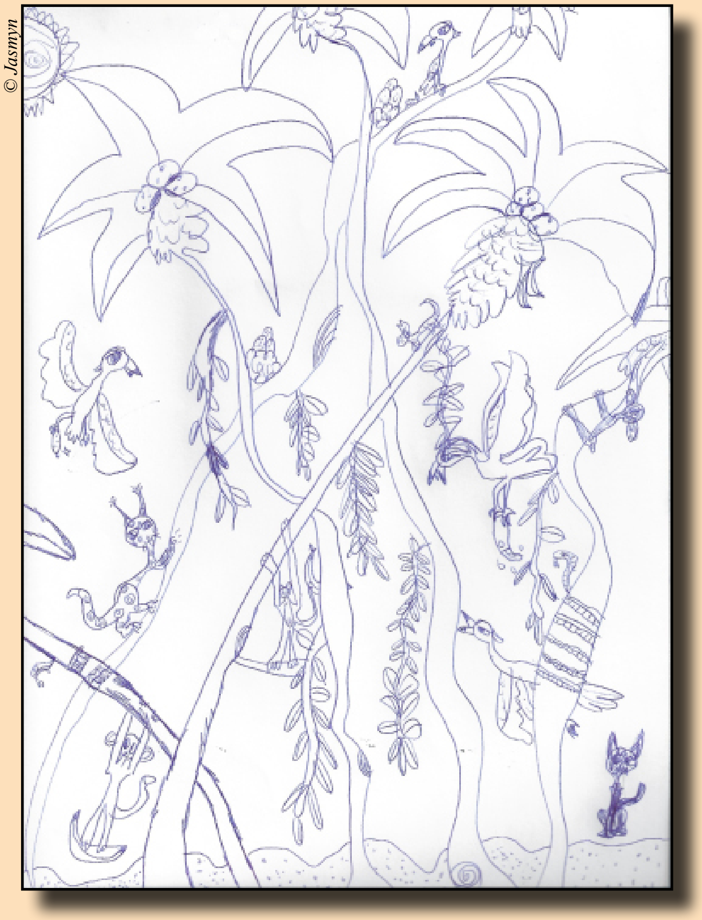
DRAWINGS BY JASMYN, AGE 8



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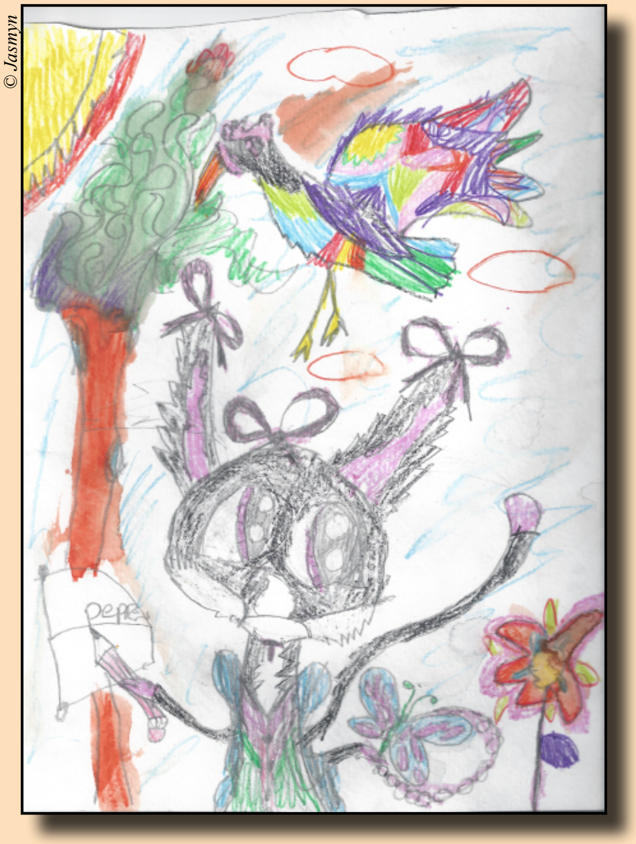

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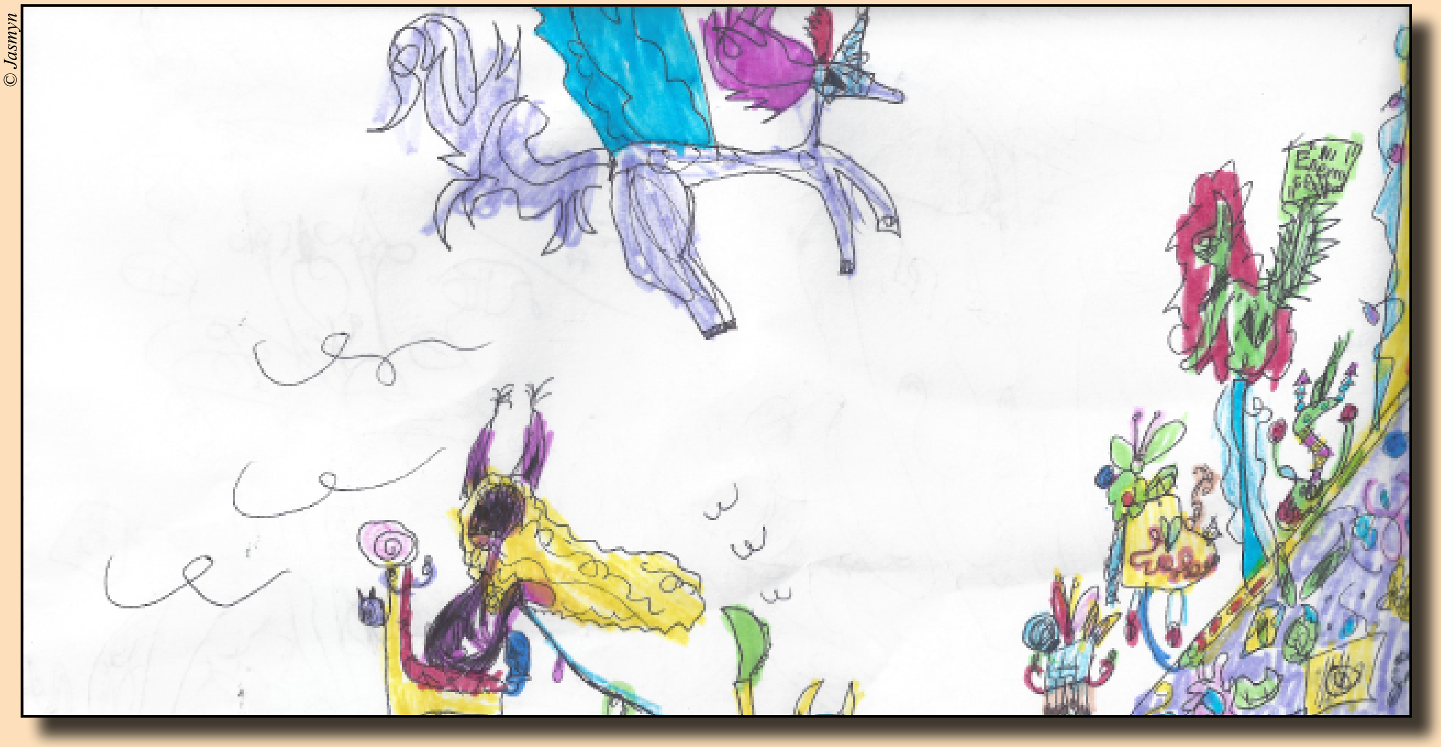

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© Sophia Kelly Shultz

Sideling Hill Creek,
Artemas, PA

AROUND THE AMERICAS

© Sophia Kelly Shultz

An old earthworks, origin unknown, runs along Sideling Hill Creek on the path from Members' Camp to the Farm House at Four Quarters Interfaith Sanctuary, Artemas, PA.

NEW SEED GROUP ESTABLISHED IN NORTH TEXAS

BY CLINT CHAMBERLAIN

A new seed group has been started in Texas! River of Stars Druid Fellowship will have its inaugural meeting on September 26 in celebration of Alban Elfed. Although centered in the North Texas region, including Dallas, Fort Worth, Denton, and the surrounding area, the group is open to all members of OBOD regardless of location. Friends, supporters, and members of other Druid groups are also welcome.

Bluebonnet, the Texas state flower

River of Stars plans to meet for the seasonal festivals as well as for regular meetings to discuss topics of interest to its members. It is currently in negotiations with a Unitarian Universalist congregation in hopes of securing long-term use of their wooded grounds and buildings as a location for seasonal celebrations and monthly meetings. River of Stars is also planning an annual camping trip at Beltane as well as explorations of local nature preserves to help members learn more about local flora and fauna.

For further information, please contact Clint at riverofstarsfellowship@gmail.com, or seek the group out on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/riverofstarsdruids.

The Milky Way Galaxy, an inspiraton for the new Texas seed group's name

Although his career as an information professional brought Clint Chamberlain to the big city, he will always be a child of the swamps and forests of his native East Texas. He spends his time trying to become a better neighbor to the land and its inhabitants in his corner of the city. He is also Druid Magazine's chief researcher.

EAST COAST GATHERING 2015
FROM A NEWBIE PERSPECTIVE

BY JASON STIEBER

When I first joined the Oak and Eagle seed group in northern Virginia after Lughnasadh in 2014, I was encouraged to attend OBOD's East Coast Gathering that September. My new friends told me it was a legendary good time in a mythically beautiful place. I'd already started studying the Gwersi for OBOD's Bardic Grade and could experience a proper initiation, receive guidance from veteran OBODies, and soak up offerings at seminars and around the bonfire. Despite my excitement for this new path, I hesitated. I was almost as new to Druidry as I was to Paganism in general. Who were these beautiful hippies trying to lure me into the woods just a few days after meeting me?

© Hex Nottingham

One of ECG's infamous roaring campfires

By the time registration opened this spring for the 2015 gathering, I was pretty sure they were my family. I was lucky enough to log in during that narrow 20-hour window of time before tickets for the weekend sold out! I couldn't wait for mid-September.

I arrived late Wednesday night, Sept.16th, at Camp Netimus and stumbled around in near complete darkness looking for my seed group's campsite. The warm lights of the main dining hall beckoned, and there, lounging in a row of veranda chairs, I found Kristoffer Hughes, Damh the Bard, and Cerri Lee taking in the night air. Mr. Hughes looked me over with my sleeping roll under one arm and a needy expression on my face, and he asked with that lovely Welsh lilt, "Camp virgin then?"

I was introduced to camp organizer Lorraine Soria, who immediately pressed me into kitchen duty, an opportunity for volunteerism that I now realize is simply the best way to experience ECG. Gabbie Batz Roberts, whose leadership kept everyone fed for the weekend, escorted me across the green to my campsite. We turned off our flashlights a couple of times to take in the expanse of the

Milky Way, a sight I hadn't seen for many years. I found my seed group and slept in the arms of the noisy crickets and toads of the wood surrounding camp.

The theme of this year's gathering was "Exploring Ritual." Many of the weekend seminars honored this theme. Cerri Lee gave a talk entitled, *The Art of Ritual*, which highlighted the central role that ritual *should* play in human culture, but which has been more or less lost in our modern, urban lives. I considered how lacking my own life experience was in a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Perhaps I shouldn't have needed 10 years to learn how to be a grown-up (I'm still learning). In another workshop, Barbara Pott gave a spell binding talk on the value and techniques of movement in ritual. I have a lot of new ideas to try out in my seed group back home, not to mention in my own private rituals and meditations.

© John Beckett

Druid Magazine's Deputy Editor Rob Pacitti ready for ritual at ECG

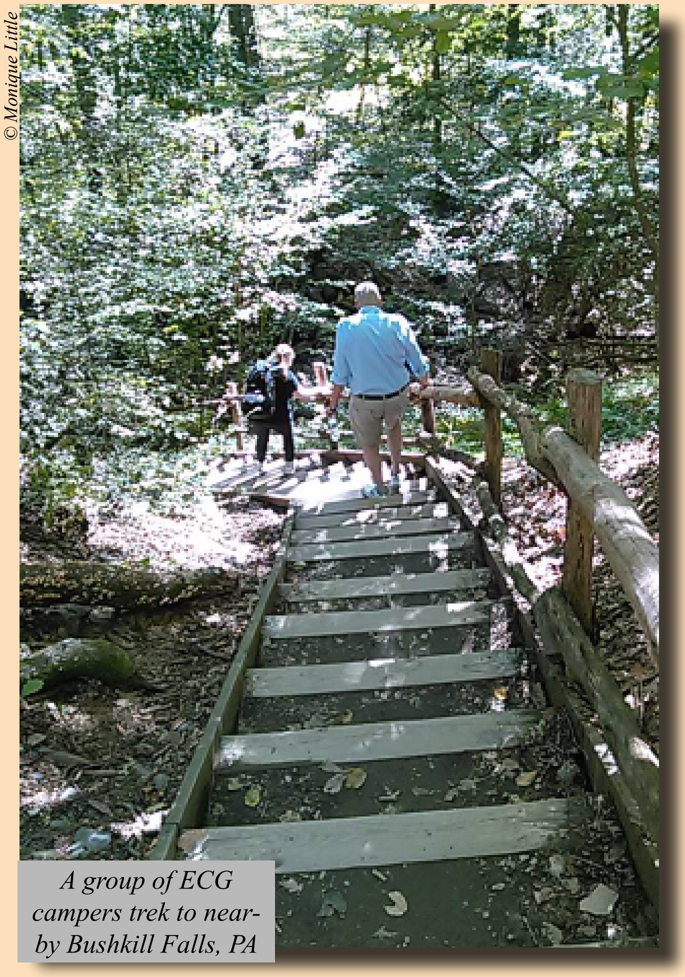
I didn't attend many other talks because I was frequently called into the woods around camp. My first duty was to help gather deadfall to stoke the camp's nightly fires, a monumental task performed admirably by Brom Hanks and Derek Batz, the camp fire tenders and mead-makers. The forest also called me to many personal hikes on its mossy paths. If you haven't been to Camp Netimus, it's hard to describe how friendly its birch, oak, and maple forests are. It's a young, playful, and vigorous forest. At that time of year, even a tickling breeze calls down a rain of laughing acorns. I was astonished by the complete lack of biting insects or any troublesome plants like poison ivy—at least that I ran into. It's a forest that would welcome the skyclad, although there was none of that, unfortunately. Camp rules!

The nights at ECG are equally magical, with the bow of the visible galaxy stretching above us and a fire at the center of our circle. Damh the Bard gave a marvelous performance on the first night, and he joined with the camp's many talented Bards each night thereafter.

Sunday morning found us all a little hung over—and more than a little sad for the end of camp. At closing ritual, many in the circle came forward to share their thoughts and thanks. I was particularly touched by the words of Rylin Mariel, who had performed the Mari Lywd so beautifully around the fire the night before. She stepped forward and shared what she thought was an impossible dream: that we all live together on that land and work together for the common good. I share her sentiment. But, as we all awaken our spirit and deepen our connection to the land through camps, ritual, activism, and private meditation, we *do* live and work together, however distantly we might seem separated by geography. Bound by tradition, love, creativity, and no small measure of mead, it is my sincere hope that each of us left Camp Netimus that cool Sunday morning with a renewed sense of companionship with each other and with this beautiful planet that sustains us.

Look for more stories and photographs from ECG 2015 in the next issue of Druid Magazine!

Jason Stieber is an archivist who lives in Washington, DC. He celebrates the wheel of the year with the Oak and Eagle seed group in northern Virginia. He will soon finish his studies in the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druid's Bardic Grade and looks forward to applying to Ovate coursework this winter.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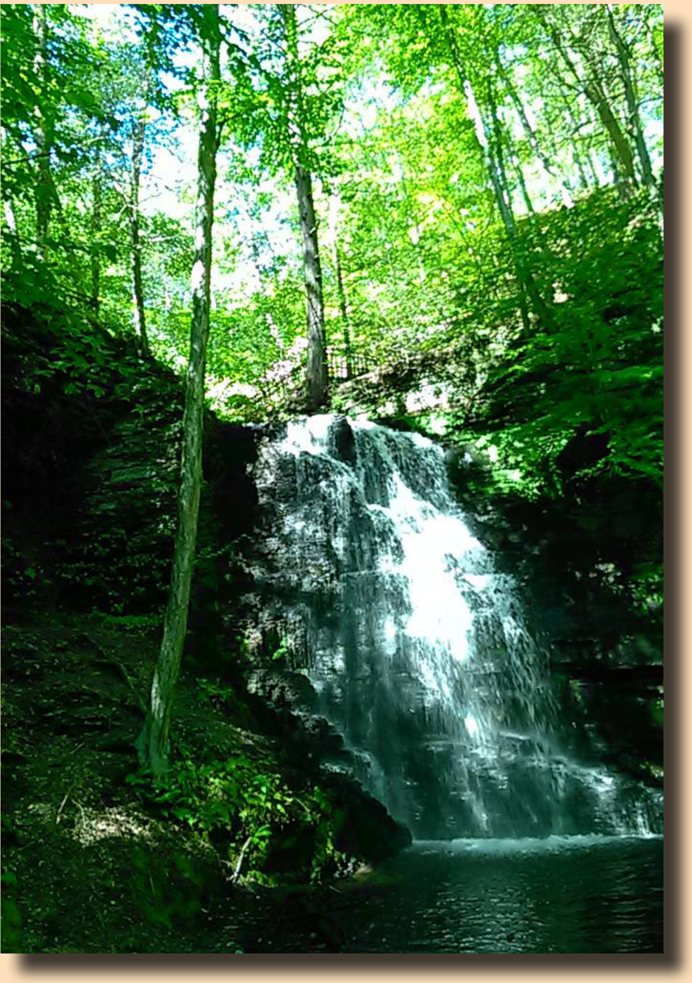
A group of ECG campers trek to nearby Bushkill Falls, PA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A HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

BY WANDA C.

Like many Americans, my ancestors came from across the Atlantic Ocean a few hundred years ago. The United States is considered the Great Melting Pot because people have come here from all over the world. Some were enslaved while others fled their home countries or left of their own cognition in search of a better place to call home.

© Wanda C.

Overlook of Loch Garry that is uniquely shaped as a map of Scotland

Some Americans are born, grow up, live, and die in the exact same state, city or town, neighborhood, and, perhaps, even the same house. They never leave their own backyard. Yet, similar to our ancestors, there are many of us who wander off and travel to new lands or return to our family's origins and see if perhaps there is a connection of our spirits to that place we may have heard old stories about in childhood. Growing up as an American with a lack of singular culture, I share a yearning for the past with many of my friends. We are drawn to learn of ancestors or the land where we came from whether our ancestral roots are far away or native to this country.

I was born under a wandering star; perhaps it is my name (Wanda) or just that my family has always looked to their past history. My uncle once conducted a family name history search, and my family members and I learned that our ancestors were huntsmen to the king and that our name goes back to a market town in the south of England. We also have ancestors who were fisherman on the coasts of Ireland. Finding all this out sparked my interest for the romance of the medieval times, and it ignited a flame of enchantment with Merlin and the Arthurian times. Or, it could have been the ancestral call of the pipes playing across the glens and lochs of Scotland that beckoned to my spirit. I do not know.

Lucky for me, I was raised without any religion foisted upon me. I was free to explore, learn, and choose my beliefs of my own free will. What a break! I grew up with fairytales, and it always felt like those castles and wizards, knights and

© Wanda C.

View from the top of Blarney Castle, Ireland

dragons were all the way over there, across the great Atlantic Ocean. The old tales weaved their rich tapestry in my head, and they made me and my friends long to really be Sleeping Beauty or Snow White. Now older, some of us dive deep into the historical romance novels that pick up where the fairy tales left off and—again—we dream. We dream of knights of old and ere so bold that come charging forth upon their white steeds to save the damsels in distress. Yet? It is not what happens. We grow up, and many of those in my generation accepted the lessons to be independent, strong, and save ourselves rather than wait for a hero. We forged our own path, our own adventures in this world.

Still, there is a soft, subtle calling to our hearts, our spirits. That lingering dream that sits just there upon the edges of our subconscious, whispering hope that what we had read as children is still there, is still possible. One day.

What does all of that have to do with Druidry? Well, growing up without any religion made me explore and learn different religions and faiths to see what fit me. The tales that captured my imagination soon helped me to realize that few religions or beliefs resonated with me. I am a Bard at heart, the poetry, gallantry, and song instilled within me comes forth in my spiritual practice. How could I reconcile myself to be subservient or to not believe in magic? How could I sequester myself within convent walls or walls at all when there is a bevy of beauteous mountains and forests and waterfalls, oceans and rivers and creeks, oh my? All of it waiting for us.

We can walk into nature and see the buzzing of the bees and butterflies skipping along from flower to flower, or we can watch mating blue dragonflies land on our toes while we float on an inner tube down a muddy creek on a lazy warm summer day. We can feel so at home as if the world is at peace at that very moment. Imagine us laughing as we go flying down the roaring rapids in

© Wanda C.

Glencoe Pass, Scotland

our little blue boat, not caring about the rocks at all and having such a good time that hours fly by as minutes.

Let's duck under tendrils of weeping willow leaves, grasping a few in our hands as we take a running leap up into the air to fly and sing and laugh the day away. As we catch hop toads and experience the water rushing over the dam and slate rocks as our sanctuary, how can we not feel as one with the land at that moment? Come swim in the ocean tides as they rise in the waves, and pretend to be a selkie splashing in the moonlight that shines upon the water in the bay of Mallaig across from the Isle of Skye. Can you hear the call to your Celtic spirit?

© Wanda C.

Jacobite steam train, Scotland

The first time I wandered through the Highlands of Scotland as a young woman, I listened to the bagpipes echoing through Glencoe Pass and over the desolate Rannoch Moor and the Scots Gaelic of Capercallie singing the sweet melancholy lament of Iain Ghlinn 'Cuaich and you feel tears slip down from the corners of your eyes, wiping them away as you pen a poem that comes out as a song while seeing the reflection of yourself upon the Highland hills in the windows of the Jacobite steam train. The land called to me so intrinsically and deeply, I couldn't ignore it.

I am no different from many other Americans who go in search of their roots and find it them in a myriad of places. We embrace our Celtic heritage, breathing life into it once again. We are somehow connected or drawn to another land. Our spirits feel that familiarity and, as much as our ancestors may have fled or ventured off to a new land, we long to return to the old one. It felt like something was missing in my life, like growing up without a religion had been. Druidry was that natural answer. It mirrors nature after all—there is not just a God or Goddess, but an equal pairing, much as those dragonflies and nearly all living creatures have an equal counterpart, everything in balance and harmony.

Finding Druidry within the United States was not so easy in the 1970s, but thankfully, today, OBOD and other Druid orders have found their way here more prominently. Once I learned of my ancestral background and made those connections, I then turned to my present with Druidry there shining brightly in the golden sun to welcome me home. It has filled my heart and let my spirit soar across the land once again, drawing together each of those fine threads to weave the tapestry complete. Gifting me—and many on this journey—with the eyes then cast to our future.

Being an American Druid was that natural step to feeling at one with the world. Druids seek out not only our past, but our present and future. Mindful of the lessons of our ancestors, we strive to bring back that reverence for the land once again, having seen what today's world has done to destroy it. To take the dreams and hopes of a child and merge them with the grown adult's reality of what the world is really like at this moment and realize how right the child had it. The innocence and purity of a child's vision of the world and her people, her living things, creatures big and small, animal, plant and mineral, bringing them together as that fine tapestry to weave a most wonderful world. What do you do to bring it all back into focus again? How do you reconcile it?

It is my hope that as American Druids, we may help to bring back the reverence of nature and embrace the people of the world with love and respect. To realize that without nature, we will cease to exist. Truly think about that, without the bees, without the trees, we simply are not able to eat or to breathe. It is time to give back to our world and, yes, as an American Druid. Druidry spreads from bonfire to bonfire, hand in hand. We may help to make the world a better place to breathe and live, where we are kinder to each other, more accepting and more giving.

And although I am an American Druid, I see myself more as simply a Druid. A Druid of the world with no borders, no lines drawn, no 'star upon thar's' as in the Sneetches book by Dr. Seuss (1961). Yet more as The Lorax (Dr. Seuss, 1971), for as Druids, we speak for the trees. We speak for people and the life within our seas. We stand for the world and all of nature and the bounty therein. Weep for what has gone and embrace what is before us now.

Being a Druid, I am home. Embracing it all together and finding a peace within our souls and radiating that to others, sharing in that love of self, of other, of the world, will bring about just that one simple thing for the world: hope.

May the rays of that hope, shine on.

/|\

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Mother of two and former member of the U.S. Air Force & Reserves, Wanda has lived all over the world. She is a haunter by nature with a deep affinity for Samhuinn, Halloween, and the paranormal. She enjoys reading tarot, writing, and travel.

See Wanda's news feature and poem in this issue.

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Blue Moon
Rehoboth Beach, DE

© Brom Hanks

Blood Moon
Royalston, MA